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BY

WILLIAM D. HOWELLS

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A PILGRIMAGE TO PETRARCH'S HOUSE AT ARQUÀ.

I.

WE said, during summer days at Venice, when every *campo* was a furnace seven times heated, and every canal was filled with broiling bathers, "As soon as it rains we will go to Arquà." Remembering the ardours of an April sun on the long, level roads of plain, we could not think of them in August without a sense of dust clogging every pore, and eyes that shrank from the vision of their blinding whiteness. So we stayed in Venice, waiting for rain, until the summer had almost lapsed into autumn; and as the weather cooled before any rain reached us, we took the moisture on the mainland for granted, and set out under a cloudy and windy sky.

We had to go to Padua by railway, and take carriage thence to Arquà upon the road to Ferrara. I believe no rule of human experience was violated when it began to rain directly after we reached Padua, and continued to rain violently the whole day. We gave up this day entirely to the rain, and did not leave Padua until the following morning, when we count that our pilgrimage to Petrarch's house actually began.

The rain had cooled and freshened the air, but it was already too late in the season for the summer to recover herself with the elastic brilliancy that follows the rain of July or early August; and there was I know not what vague sentiment of autumn in the weather. There was not yet enough of it to stir the

"Tears from the depth of some divine despair;"

but in here and there a faded leaf (for in Europe death is not glorified to the foliage as in our own land), in the purple of the ripening grapes, and in the tawny grass of the pasture), there was autumn enough to touch our spirits, and while it hardly affected the tone of the landscape, to lay upon us the gentle and pensive spell of its presence. Of all the days in the year I

would have chosen this to go pilgrim to the house of Petrarch.

The Euganean Hills, on one of which the poet's house is built, are those mellow heights which you see when you look southwest across the lagoon at Venice. In misty weather they are blue and in clear weather silver, and the October sunset loves them. They rise in tender azure before you as you issue from the southern gate of Padua, and grow in loveliness as you draw nearer to them from the rich plain that washes their feet with endless harvests of oil and wine.

O beauty that will not let itself be told! Could I not take warning from another, and refrain from this fruitless effort of description? A friend in Padua had lent me Disraeli's *Venetia*, because a passage of the story occurs in Petrarch's house at Arquà, and we carried the volumes with us on our pilgrimage. I would here quote the description of the village, the house, and the hills from this work, as faultlessly true, and as affording no just idea of either; but nothing of it has remained in my mind except the geological fact that the hills are a volcanic range. To tell the truth, the landscape, as we rode along, continually took my mind off the book, and I could not give

the attention either to the elegant language of its descriptions, or the adventures of its well-born characters, which they deserved. I was even more interested in the disreputable-looking person who mounted the box beside our driver directly we got out of the city gate, and who invariably commits this infringement upon your rights in Italy, no matter how strict and cunningly you frame your contract that no one else is to occupy any part of the carriage but yourself. He does not seem to be the acquaintance of the driver, for they never exchange a word, and he does not seem to pay anything for the ride. He got down, in this instance, just before we reached the little town at which our driver stopped, and asked us if we wished to drink a glass of the wine of the country. We did not, but his own thirst seemed to answer equally well, and he slaked it cheerfully at our cost.

The fields did not present the busy appearance which had delighted us on the same road in the spring, but they had that autumnal charm already mentioned. Many of the vine-leaves were sear; the red grapes were already purple, and the white grapes pearly ripe, and they formed a gorgeous necklace for the trees, around which they

clung in opulent festoons. Then, dearer to our American hearts than this southern splendour, were the russet fields of Indian corn, and, scattered among the shrunken stalks, great nuggets of the "harmless gold" of pumpkins.

At Battaglia (the village just beyond which you turn off to go to Arquà) there was a fair, on the blessed occasion of some saint's day, and there were many booths full of fruits, agricultural implements, toys, clothes, wooden ware, and the like. There was a great crowd and a noise, but, according to the mysterious Italian custom, nobody seemed to be buying or selling. I am in the belief that a small purchase of grapes we made here on our return was the great transaction of the day, unless, indeed, the neat operation in alms achieved at our expense by a mendicant villager may be classed commercially.

When we turned off from the Rovigo road at Battaglia we were only three miles from Arquà.

II.

Now, all the way from this turning to the foot of the hill on which the village was stretched asleep in the tender sunshine, there was on either side of the road a stream

of living water. There was no other barrier than this between the road and the fields (unless the vines swinging from tree to tree formed a barrier), and, as if in graceful excuse for the interposition of even these slender streams, Nature had lavished such growth of wild-flowers and wild berries on the banks that it was like a garden avenue, through the fragrance and beauty of which we rolled, delighted to silence, almost to sadness.

When we began to climb the hill to Arquà, and the driver stopped to breathe his horse, I got out and finished the easy ascent on foot. The great marvel to me is that the prospect of the vast plain below, on which, turning back, I feasted my vision, should be there yet, and always. It had the rare and saddening beauty of evanescence, and awoke in me the memory of all beautiful scenery, so that I embroidered the landscape with the silver threads of western streams, and bordered it with Ohio hills. Ohio hills? When I looked again it was the storied Euganean group. But what trans-oceanic bird, voyaging hither, dropped from its mouth the blackberry which took root and grew and blossomed and ripened, that I might taste Home in it on these classic hills?

I wonder did Petrarch walk often down this road from his house just above? I figured him coming to meet me with his book in his hand, in his reverend poetic robes, and with his laurel on, over that curious kind of bandaging which he seems to have been fond of—looking, in a word, for all the world like the neuralgic Petrarch in the pictures.

Drawing nearer, I discerned the apparition to be a robeless, laurelless lout, who belonged at the village inn. Yet this lout, though not Petrarch, had merits. His face and hands, and his legs, as seen from his knees down, had the tone of the richest bronze; he wore a mountain cap with a long tasselled fall to the back of it; his face was comely and his eye beautiful: and he was so nobly ignorant of everything that a colt or young bullock could not have been better company. He merely offered to guide us to Petrarch's house, and was silent, except when spoken to, from that instant.

I am here tempted to say; Arquà is in the figure of a man stretched upon the hill slope. The head, which is Petrarch's house, rests upon the summit. The carelessly tossed arms lie abroad from this in one direction, and the legs in the opposite quarter. It

is a very lank and shambling figure, without elegance or much proportion, and the attitude is the last wantonness of loafing. We followed our lout up the right leg, which is a gentle and easy ascent in the general likeness of a street. World-old stone cottages crouch on either side; here and there is a more ambitious house in decay; trees wave over the street, and down its distance comes an occasional donkey-cart very musically and leisurely. By all odds, Arquà and its kind of villages are to be preferred to those hamlets of the plain which in Italy cling to the white-hot highway without a tree to shelter them, and bake and burn there in the merciless sun. Their houses of stuccoed stone are crowded as thickly together as city houses, and these wretched little villages do their worst to unite the discomforts of town and country with a success dreadful to think of. In all countries villages are hateful to the heart of civilised man. In the Lombard plains I wonder that one stone of them rests upon another.

We reached Petrarch's house before the custodian had arrived to admit us, and stood before the high stone wall which shuts in the front of the house, and quite hides it from those without. This wall bears the

inscription, "*Casa Petrarca,*" and a marble tablet lettered to the following effect:—

SE TI AGITA
SACRO AMORE DI PATRIA,
T'INCHINA A QUESTE MURA
OVE SPIRÒ LA GRAND' ANIMA,
IL CANTOR DEI SCIPIONI
E DI LAURA.

Which may be translated: "If thou art stirred by love of country, bow to these walls, whence passed the great soul, the singer of the Scipios and of Laura."

Meanwhile we became the centre of a group of the youths of Arquà, who had kindly attended our progress in gradually increasing numbers from the moment we had entered the village. They were dear little girls and boys, and mountain babies, all with sunburnt faces and the gentle and the winning ways native to this race, which Nature loves better than us of the North. The blonde pilgrim seemed to please them, and they evidently took us for *Tedeschi.* You learn to submit to this fate in Northern Italy, however ungracefully, for it is the one that constantly befalls you outside of the greatest cities. The people know but two varieties of foreigners—the Englishman

and the German. If, therefore, you have not *rosbif* expressed in every lineament of your countenance; if the soles of your boots are less than an inch thick, and your clothes are not reduced in colour to the invariable and maddening tone of the English tweed, —you must resign yourself to be a German. All this is grievous to the soul which loves to spread its eagle in every land and to be known as American, with star-spangled conspicuousness all over the world: but it cannot be helped. I vainly tried to explain the geographical, political, and natural difference between Tedeschi and Americani to the custodian of Petrarch's house. She listened with amiability, shrugged her shoulders hopelessly, and said, in her rude Venetian, "*Mi no so miga*" (I don't know at all).

Before she came, I had a mind to prove the celebrity of a poet on the spot where he lived and died,—on his very hearthstone, as it were. So I asked the lout, who stood gnawing a stick and shifting his weight from one foot to the other–

"When did Petrarch live here?"

"Ah! I don't remember him."

"Who was he?"

"A poet, signor."

Certainly the first response was not encouraging, but the last revealed that even to the heavy and clouded soul of this lout the divine fame of the poet had penetrated —and he a lout in the village where Petrarch lived and ought to be first forgotten. He did not know when Petrarch had lived there,—a year ago, perhaps, or many centuries,—but he knew that Petrarch was a poet. A weight of doubt was lifted from my spirit, and I responded cheerfully to some observations on the weather offered by a rustic matron who was pitching manure on the little hill-slope near the house. When, at last, the custodian came and opened the gate to us, we entered a little grassy yard from which a flight of steps led to Petrarch's door. A few flowers grew wild among the grass, and a fig-tree leaned its boughs against the wall. The figs on it were green, though they hung ripe and blackening on every other tree in Arquà. Some ivy clung to the stones, and from this and the fig-tree, as we came away, we plucked memorial leaves, and blended them with flowers which the youth of Arquà picked and forced upon us for remembrance.

A quaint old door opened into the little stone house, and admitted us to a kind of

wide passage-way with rooms on either side; and at the end opposite to which we entered, another door opened upon a balcony. From this balcony we looked down on Petrarch's garden, which, presently speaking, is but a narrow space with more fruit than flowers in it. Did Petrarch use to sit and meditate in this garden? For me I should better have liked a chair on the balcony, with the further and lovelier prospect on every hand of village roofs, sloping hills all grey with olives, and the broad, blue Lombard plain, sweeping from heaven to heaven below.

The walls of the passage-way are frescoed (now very faintly) in illustration of the loves of Petrarch and Laura, with verses from the sonnets inscribed to explain the illustrations. In all these Laura prevails as a lady of a singularly long waist and stiff movements, and Petrarch, with his face tied up and a lily in his hand, contemplates the flower in mingled botany and toothache. There is occasionally a startling literalness in the way the painter has rendered some of the verses. I remember with peculiar interest the illustration of a lachrymose passage concerning a river of tears, wherein the weeping Petrarch, stretched beneath a tree, had already started

a small creek of tears, which was rapidly swelling to a flood with the torrent from his eyes. I attribute these frescoes to a later date than that of the poet's residence, but the portrait over the door of the bedroom inside of the chamber was of his own time, and taken from him—the custodian said. As it seemed to look like all the Petrarchian portraits, I did not remark it closely, but rather turned my attention to the walls of the chamber, which were thickly over-scribbled with names. They were nearly all Italian, and none English, so far as I saw. This passion for allying oneself to the great, by inscribing one's name on places hallowed by them, is certainly very odd; and (I reflected as I added our names to the rest) it is, without doubt, the most impertinent and idiotic custom in the world. People have thus written themselves down, to the contempt of sensible futurity, all over Petrarch's house.

The custodian insisted that the bedroom was just as in the poet's time; some rooms beyond it had been restored; the kitchen at its side was also repaired. Crossing the passage-way, we now entered the dining-room, which was comparatively large and lofty, with a mighty and generous fire-place

at one end, occupying the whole space left by a balcony window. The floor was paved with tiles, and the window-panes were round and small, and set in lead—like the floors and window-panes of all the other rooms. A gaudy fresco, representing some indelicate female deity, adorned the front of the fireplace, which sloped expanding from the ceiling and terminated at the mouth without a mantelpiece. The chimney was deep, and told of the cold winters in the hills, of which, afterward, the landlady of the village inn prattled less eloquently.

From this dining-room opens, to the right, the door of the room which they call Petrarch's library; and above the door, set in a marble frame, with a glass before it, is all that is mortal of Petrarch's cat, except the hair. Whether or not the fur was found incompatible with the process of embalming, and therefore removed, or whether it has slowly dropped away with the lapse of centuries, I do not know; but it is certain the cat is now quite hairless, and has the effect of a wash-leather invention in the likeness of a young lamb. On the marble slab below there is a Latin inscription, said to be by the great poet himself, declaring this cat to have been "second only to Laura." We may,

therefore, believe its virtues to have been rare enough ; and cannot well figure to ourselves Petrarch sitting before that wide-mouthed fire-place, without beholding also the gifted cat that purrs softly at his feet and nestles on his knees, or, with thickened tail and lifted back, parades loftily round his chair in the haughty and disdainful manner of cats.

In the library, protected against the predatory enthusiasm of visitors by a heavy wire netting, are the desk and chair of Petrarch, which I know of no form of words to describe perfectly. The front of the desk is of a kind of mosaic in cubes of wood, most of which have been carried away. The chair is wide-armed and carved, but the bottom is gone, and it has been rudely repaired. The custodian said Petrarch died in this chair while he sat writing at his desk in the little nook lighted by a single window opening on the left from his library. He loved to sit there. As I entered I found he had stepped out for a moment, but I know he returned directly after I withdrew.

On one wall of the library (which is a simple oblong room, in nowise remarkable) was a copy of verses in a frame, by Cesarotti, and on the wall opposite a tribute from

Alfieri, both *manu propriâ*. Over and above these are many other scribblings; and hanging over the door of the poet's little nook was a criminal French lithograph likeness of "Pétrarque" when young.

Alfieri's verses are written in ink on the wall, while those of Cesarotti are on paper, and framed. I do not remember any reference to his visit to Petrarch's house in Alfieri's autobiography, though the visit must have taken place in 1783, when he sojourned at Padua, and "made the acquaintance of the celebrated Cesarotti, with whose lively and courteous manners he was no less satisfied than he had always been in reading his (Cesarotti's) most masterly version of *Ossian*." It is probable that the friends visited the house together. At any rate, I care to believe that while Cesarotti sat "composing" his tribute comfortably at the table, Alfieri's impetuous soul was lifting his tall body on tiptoe to scrawl its inspirations on the plastering.

Do you care, gentle reader, to be reminded that just before this visit Alfieri had heard in Venice of the "peace between England and the United Colonies," and that he then and there "wrote the fifth ode of the *America Libera*," and thus finished that poem?

After copying these verses we returned to the dining-room, and while one pilgrim strayed idly through the names in the visitor's book, the other sketched Petrarch's cat, before mentioned, and Petrarch's ink-stand of bronze—a graceful little thing, having a cover surmounted by a roguish cupid, while the lower part is supported on three lion's claws, and just above the feet, at either of the three corners, is an exquisite little female bust and head. Thus sketching and idling, we held spell-bound our friends the youth of Arquà, as well as our driver, who, having brought innumerable people to see the house of Petrarch, now for the first time, with great astonishment, beheld the inside of it himself.

As to the authenticity of the house I think there can be no doubt, and as to the genuineness of the relics there, nothing in the world could shake my faith in them, though Muratori certainly characterises them as "superstitions." The great poet was sixty-five years old when he came to rest at Arquà, and when, in his own pathetic words, "there remained to him only to consider and to desire how to make a good end." He says further, at the close of his autobiography: "In one of the Euganean hills,

near to ten miles from the city of Padua, I have built me a house, small but pleasant and decent, in the midst of slopes clothed with vines and olives, abundantly sufficient for a family not large and discreet. Here I lead my life, and although, as I have said, infirm of body, yet tranquil of mind, without excitements, without distractions, without cares, reading always, and writing and praising God, and thanking God as well for evil as for good; which evil, if I err not, is trial merely, and not punishment. And all the while I pray to Christ that He make good the end of my life, and have mercy on me, and forgive me, and even forget my youthful sins; wherefore, in this solitude, no words are so sweet to my lips as these of the psalm: '*Delicta juventutis meæ, et ignorantias meas ne memineris.*' And with every feeling of the heart I pray God, when it please Him, to bridle my thoughts, so long unstable and erring; and as they have vainly wandered to many things, to turn them all to Him—only true, certain, immutable Good."

I venerate the house at Arquà because these sweet and solemn words were written in it. We left its revered shelter (after taking a final look from the balcony down

upon "the slopes clothed with vines and olives") and returned to the lower village, where, in the court of the little church, we saw the tomb of Petrarch—"an ark of red stone, upon four columns likewise of marble." The epitaph is this :—

"Frigida Francisci lapis hic tegit ossa Petrarcæ;
Suscipe, Virgo parens, animam; sate Virgine, parce
Fessaque jam terris Cœli requiescat in arce."

A head of the poet in bronze surmounts the ark. The housekeeper of the parish priest, who ran out to enjoy my admiration and bounty, told me a wild local tradition of an attempt on the part of the Florentines to steal the bones of Petrarch away from Arquà, in proof of which she showed me a block of marble set into the ark, whence she said a fragment had been removed by the Florentines. This local tradition I afterwards found verified, with names and dates, in a little *Life of Petrarch*, by F. Leoni, published at Padua in 1843 It appears that this curious attempt of the Florentines to do doubtful honour to the great citizen whose hereditary civic rights they restored too late (about the time he was drawing nigh his "good end" at Arquà), was made for them by a certain monk of Portagruaro named Tommaso Martinelli. He had a

general instruction from his employers to bring away from Arquà "any important thing of Petrarch's" that he could; and it occurred to this ill-advised friar to "move his bones." He succeeded on a night of the year 1630 in stealing the dead poet's arm. The theft being at once discovered, the Venetian Republic rested not till the thief was also discovered; but what became of the arm or of the sacrilegious monk neither the Signor Leoni nor the old women of Arquà give any account. The Republic removed the rest of Petrarch's body, which is now said to be in the Royal Museum of Madrid.

I was willing to know more of this quaint village of Arquà, and I rang at the parish priest's door to beg of him some account of the place, if any were printed. But already at one o'clock he had gone to bed for a nap, and must on no account be roused till four. It is but a quiet life men lead in Arquà, and their souls are in drowsy hands. The amount of sleep which this good man gives himself (if he goes to bed at 9 P.M. and rises at 9 A.M., with a nap of three hours during the day) speaks of a quiet conscience, a good digestion, and uneventful days. As I turned this notion over in my mind, my longing to behold his reverence increased, that I might

read life at Arquà in the smooth curves of his well-padded countenance. I thought it must be that his "bowels of compassion were well-rounded," and, making sure of absolution, I was half-minded, if I got speech with him, to improve the occasion by confessing one or two of my blackest sins.

Ought I to say here that, on the occasion of a second visit to Arquà, I succeeded in finding this excellent ecclesiastic wide awake at two o'clock in the afternoon, and that he granted me an interview at that hour? Justice to him, I think, demands this admission of me. He was not at all a fat priest, as I had prefigured him, but rather of a spare person, and of a brisk and lively manner. At the village inn, after listening half an hour to a discourse on nothing but white wine from a young priest, who had stopped to drink a glass of it, I was put in the way of seeing the priest of Arquà by the former's courtesy. Happily enough, his reverence chanced to have the very thing I wanted to see—no other than Leoni's *Life of Petrarch*, to which I have already referred. Courtesy is the blood in an Italian's veins, and I need not say that the ecclesiastic of Arquà, seeing my interest in the place, was very polite and obliging. But he continued to sleep through-

out our first stay in Arquà, and I did not see him then.

I strolled up and down the lazy, rambling streets, and chiefly devoted myself to watching the young women who were washing clothes at the stream running from the "Fountain of Petrarch." Their arms and legs were bronzed and bare, and they chattered and laughed gaily at their work. Their wash-tubs were formed by a long marble conduit from the fountain; their wash-boards, by the inward sloping conduit-sides; and they thrashed and beat the garments clean upon the smooth stone. To a girl, their waists were broad and their ankles thick. Above their foreheads the hair was cut short, and their "back hair" was gathered into a mass, and held together by a converging circle of silver pins.

The Piazza della Fontana, in Arquà, is a place some fifty feet in length and breadth, and seems to be a favourite place of public resort. In the evening, doubtless, it is alive with gossipers, as now with workers. It may be that then his reverence, risen from his nap, saunters by, and pauses long enough to chuck a pretty girl under the chin or pinch an urchin's cheek.

Our dinner was ready by the time I got

back to the inn, and we sat down to a chicken stewed in oil and a stoup of the white wine of Arquà. It was a modest feast, but, being a friend to oil, I found it savoury, and the wine was both good and strong. While we lingered over the repast we speculated somewhat carelessly whether Arquà had retained among its simplicities the primitive Italian cheapness of which you read much. When our landlord leaned over the table and made out our account on it with a bit of chalk, the bill was as follows:—

	Soldi.
Chicken	70
Bread	8
Wine	20
Total . . .	98

It surely was not a costly dinner, yet I could have bought the same chicken in Venice for half the money; which is but another proof that the demand of the producer is often much larger than the supply of the consumer, and that to buy poultry cheaply you must not purchase it where raised,—

. . . "On misty mountain ground,
Its own vast shadow glory crowned,"—

but rather in a large city after it has been transported forty miles or more. Not that we begrudged the thrifty innkeeper his fee. We paid it cheerfully, as well for his own sake as for that of his pleasant and neat little wife, who kept the whole inn so sweet and clean; and we bade them a most cordial farewell as we drove away from their door.

III.

RETURNING, we stopped at the great castle of the Obizzi (now the property of the Duke of Modena), through which we were conducted by a surly and humorous *custode*, whose pride in life was that castle and its treasures, so that he resented as a personal affront the slightest interest in anything else. He stopped us abruptly in the midst of the museum, and, regarding the precious antiques and curiosities around him, demanded—

"Does this castle please you?" Then, with a scornful glance at us, "Your driver tells me you have been at Arquà? And what did you see at Arquà? A shabby little house and a cat without any hair on. I would not," said this disdainful *custode*, "go to Arquà if you gave me a lemonade."

A VISIT TO THE CIMBRI.

I HAD often heard in Venice of that ancient people, settled in the Alpine hills about the pretty town of Bassano, on the Brenta, whom common fame declares to be a remnant of the Cimbrian invaders of Rome, broken up in battle, and dispersed along the borders of North Italy, by Marius, many centuries ago. So when the soft September weather came, last year, we sallied out of Venice, in three, to make conquest of whatever was curious in the life and traditions of these mountaineers, who dwell in seven villages, and are therefore called the people of the Sette Communi among their Italian neighbours. We went fully armed with note-book and sketch-book, and prepared to take literary possession of our conquest.

From Venice to the city of Vicenza by railroad, it is two hours; and thence one must take a carriage to Bassano (which is an

opulent and busy little grain mart, of some twelve thousand souls, about thirty miles north of Venice). We were very glad of the ride across the country. By the time we reached the town it was nine o'clock, and moonlight, and as we glanced out of our windows we saw the quaint up-and-down-hill streets peopled with promenaders, and everybody in Bassano seemed to be making love. Young girls strolled about the picturesque ways with their lovers, and tender couples were cooing at the doorways and windows, and the scene had all that surface of romance with which the Italians contrive to varnish the real commonplaceness of their life. Our ride through the twilight landscape had prepared us for the sentiment of Bassano; we had pleased ourselves with the spectacle of the peasants returning from their labour in the fields, led in troops of eight or ten by stalwart, white-teethed, bare-legged maids; and we had revelled in the momentary lordship of an old walled town we passed, which at dusk seemed more Gothic and Middle-Age than anything after Verona, with a fine church, and turrets and battlements in great plenty. What town it was, or what it had been doing there so many ages, I have never sought to know,

and I should be sorry to learn anything about it.

The next morning we began those researches for preliminary information concerning the Cimbri which turned out so vain. Indeed, as we drew near the lurking-places of that ancient people, all knowledge relating to them diffused itself into shadowy conjecture. The barber and the bookseller differed as to the best means of getting to the Sette Communi, and the *caffettiere* at whose place we took breakfast knew nothing at all of the road, except that it was up the mountains, and commanded views of scenery which, verily, it would not grieve us to see. As to the Cimbri, he only knew that they had their own language, which was yet harder than the German. The German was hard enough, but the Cimbrian! *Corpo!*

At last, hearing of a famous cave there is at Oliero, a town some miles farther up the Brenta, we determined to go there, and it was a fortunate thought, for there we found a nobleman in charge of the cave who told us exactly how to reach the Sette Communi. You pass a bridge to get out of Bassano—a bridge which spans the crystal swiftness of the Brenta, rushing down to the Adriatic from the feet of the Alps on the north, and

full of voluble mills at Bassano. All along the road to Oliero was the finest mountain scenery, Brenta-washed, and picturesque with ever-changing lines. Maize grows in the bottom-lands, and tobacco, which is guarded in the fields by soldiers for the monopolist government. Farm-houses dot the valley, and now and then we passed villages, abounding in blonde girls, so rare elsewhere in Italy, but here so numerous as to give Titian that type from which he painted.

At Oliero we learned not only which was the road to the Sette Communi, but that we were in it, and it was settled that we should come the next day and continue in it, with the custodian of the cave, who for his breakfast and dinner, and what else we pleased, offered to accompany us. We were early at Oliero on the following morning, and found our friend in waiting; he mounted beside our driver, and we rode up the Brenta to the town of Valstagna, where our journey by wheels ended, and where we were to take mules for the mountain ascent. Our guide, Count Giovanni Bonato (for I may as well give him his title, though at this stage of our progress we did not know into what patrician care we had fallen), had already

told us what the charge for mules would be, but it was necessary to go through the ceremony of bargain with the muleteer before taking the beasts. Their owner was a Cimbrian, with a broad, sheepish face, and a heavy, awkward accent of Italian, which at once more marked his northern race and made us feel comparatively secure from plunder in his hands. He had come down from the mountain-top the night before, bringing three mules laden with charcoal, and he had waited for us till the morning. His beasts were furnished with comfortable pads, covered with linen, to ride upon, and with halters instead of bridles, and we were prayed to let them have their heads in the ascent, and not to try to guide them.

The elegant leisure of Valstagna (and in an Italian town nearly the whole population is elegantly at leisure) turned out to witness the departure of our expedition; the pretty little blonde wife of our innkeeper, who was to get dinner ready against our return, held up her baby to wish us *boun viaggio*, and waved us adieu with the infant as with a handkerchief; the chickens and children scattered to right and left before our advance; and with Count Giovanni going splendidly ahead on foot, and the Cimbrian

bringing up the rear, we struck on the broad rocky valley between the heights, and presently began the ascent. It was a lovely morning; the sun was on the heads of the hills, and the shadows clothed them like robes to their feet; and I should be glad to feel here and now the sweetness, freshness, and purity of the mountain air, that seemed to bathe our souls in a childlike delight of life. A noisy brook gurgled through the valley; the birds sang from the trees; the Alps rose, crest on crest, around us; and soft before us, among the bald peaks showed the wooded height where the Cimbrian village of Fozza stood, with a white chapel gleaming from the heart of the lofty grove. Along the mountain-sides the smoke curled from the lonely huts of shepherds, and now and then we came upon one of those melancholy refuges which are built in the hills for such travellers as are belated in their ways, or are overtaken there by storms.

The road for the most part winds by the brink of precipices,—walled in with masonry of small stones, where Nature has not shored it up with vast monoliths,—and is paved with limestone. It is, of course, merely a mule-path, and it was curious to see, and thrilling to experience, how the mules, vain

of the safety of their foothold, kept as near the border of the precipices as possible. For my own part, I abandoned to my beast the entire responsibility involved by this line of conduct; let the halter hang loose upon his neck, and gave him no aid except such slight service as was occasionally to be rendered by shutting my eyes and holding my breath. The mule of the fairer traveller behind me was not only ambitious of peril like my own, but was envious of my beast's captaincy, and continually tried to pass him on the outside of the path, to the great dismay of the gentle rider: while half-suppressed wails of terror from the second lady in the train gave evidence of equal vanity and daring in her mule. Count Giovanni strode stolidly before, the Cimbrian came behind, and we had little coherent conversation until we stopped under a spreading haw-tree, half-way up the mountain, to breathe our adventurous beasts.

Here two of us dismounted, and while one of the ladies sketched the other in her novel attitude of cavalier, I listened to the talk of Count Giovanni and the Cimbrian. This Cimbrian's name in Italian was Lazzaretti, and in his own tongue Brück, which, pronouncing less regularly, we made Brick,

in compliment to his qualities of good-fellowship. His broad, honest visage was bordered by a hedge of red beard, and a light of dry humour shone upon it: he looked, we thought, like a Cornishman, and the contrast between him and the *viso sciolto, pensieri stretti* expression of Count Giovanni was curious enough.

Concerning his people, he knew little; but the Capo-gente of Fozza could tell me everything. Various traditions of their origin were believed among them; Brick himself held to one that they had first come from Denmark. As we sat there under the spreading haw-tree, Count Giovanni and I made him give us the Cimbrian equivalent of some Italian phrases, which the curious may care to see in correspondence with English and German. Of course, German pronunciation must be given to the words:—

English.	*Cimbrian.*	*German.*
I go,	I gehe,	Ich gehe.
Thou goest,	Du gehst,	Du gehst.
He goes,	Ar geht,	Er geht.
We go,	Hamish gehen,	Wir gehen.
You go,	Hamish setender gehnt,	Ihr geht.
They go,	Dandern gehnt,	Sie gehen.
I went,	I bin gegehnt,	Ich bin gegangen.

English.	*Cimbrian.*	*German.*
Thou wentest,	Du bist gegehnt,	Du bist gegangen.
He went,	Der iganget,	Er ist gegangen.
Good day,	Uter tag,	Guten Tag.
Good night,	Uter nast,	Gute Nacht.
How do you do?	Bie estater?	Wie steht's?
How goes it?	Bie gehts?	Wie geht's?
I,	I,	Ich.
Thou,	Du,	Du.
He, She,	Di,	Er, sie.
We,	Borandern,	Wir.
You,	Ihrt,	Ihr.
They,	Dandern,	Sie.
The head,	Da kof,	Der Kopf.
Breast,	Petten,	Brust (*Italian* petto).
Face,	Denne,	Gesicht.
Arm,	Arm,	Arm.
Foot,	Vuss,	Fuss.
Finger,	Vinger,	Finger.
Hand,	Hant,	Hand.
Tree,	Pom,	Baum.
Hat,	Hoit,	Hut.
God,	Got,	Gott.
Heaven,	Debelt,	Himmel.
Earth,	Erda,	Erde.
Mountain,	Perk,	Berg.
Valley,	Tal,	Thal.
Man,	Mann,	Mann.
Woman,	Beip,	Weib.
Lady,	Vrau,	Frau.
Child,	Hint,	Kind.
Brother,	Pruder.	Bruder.

English.	*Cimbrian.*	*German.*
Father,	Vada,	Vater.
Mother,	Muter,	Mutter.
Sister,	Schwester,	Schwester.
Stone,	Stone,	Stein.

A general resemblance to German and English will have been observed in these fragments of Cimbrian, while other words will have been noticed as quite foreign to either.

There was a poor little house of refreshment beside our spreading haw, and a withered old woman came out of it and refreshed us with clear spring water, and our guides and friends with some bitter berries of the mountain, which they admitted were unpleasant to the taste, but declared were very good for the blood. When they had sufficiently improved their blood, we mounted our mules again, and set out with the journey of an hour and a quarter still between us and Fozza.

As we drew near the summit of the mountain our road grew more level, and instead of creeping along by the brinks of precipices, we began to wind through bits of meadow and pleasant valley walled in by lofty heights of rock.

Though September was bland as June at

the foot of the mountain, we found its breath harsh and cold on these heights: and we remarked that though there were here and there breadths of wheat, the land was for the most part in sheep pasturage, and the grass looked poor and stinted of summer warmth. We met at times the shepherds, who seemed to be of Italian race, and were of the conventional type of shepherds, with regular faces and two elaborate curls trained upon their cheeks, as shepherds are always represented in stone over the gates of villas. They bore staves, and their flocks went before them. Encountering us, they saluted us courteously, and when we had returned their greeting, they cried with one voice,—"Ah, lords! is not this a miserable country? The people are poor and the air is cold. It is an unhappy land!" And so passed on, profoundly sad; but we could not help smiling at the vehement popular desire to have the region abused. We answered cheerfully that it was a lovely country. If the air was cold, it was also pure.

We now drew in sight of Fozza, and, at the last moment, just before parting with Brick, we learned that he had passed a whole year in Venice, where he had brought milk from the mainland and sold it in the

city. He declared frankly that he counted that year worth all the other years of his life, and that he would never have come back to his native heights but that his father had died, and left his mother and young brothers helpless. He was an honest soul, and I gave him two florins, which I had tacitly appointed him over and above the bargain, with something for the small Brick-bats at home, whom he presently brought to kiss our hands at the house of the Capo-gente.

The village of Fozza is built on a grassy, oblong plain on the crest of the mountain, which declines from it on three sides, and on the north rises high above it into the mists in bleaker and ruggeder acclivities. There are not more than thirty houses in the village, and I do not think it numbers more than a hundred and fifty souls, if it numbers so many. Indeed, it is one of the smallest of the Sette Communi, of which the capital, Asiago, contains some thousands of people, and lies not far from Vicenza. The poor Fozzatti had a church, however, in their village, in spite of its littleness, and they had just completed a fine new bell-tower, which the Capo-gente deplored, and was proud of when I praised it. The church, like all the

other edifices, was built of stone; and the village at a little distance might look like broken crags of rock, so well it consorted with the harsh, crude nature about it. Meagre meadow-lands, pathetic with tufts of a certain pale-blue tearful flower, stretched about the village and southward as far as to that wooded point which had all day been our landmark in the ascent.

Our train drew up at the humble door of the Capo-gente (in Fozza all doors are alike humble), and, leaving our mules, we entered by his wife's invitation, and seated ourselves near the welcome fire of the kitchen—welcome, though we knew that all the sunny Lombard plain below was purple with grapes and black with figs. Again came from the women here the wail of the shepherds: "Ah, lords! is it not a miserable land?" and I began to doubt whether the love which I had heard mountaineers bore to their inclement heights was not altogether fabulous. They made haste to boil us some eggs, and set them before us with some unhappy wine, and while we were eating, the Capo-gente came in.

He was a very well-mannered person, but had, of course, the bashfulness naturally resulting from lonely life at that altitude,

where contact with the world must be infrequent. His fellow-citizens seemed to regard him with a kind of affectionate deference, and some of them came in to hear him talk with the strangers. He stood till we prayed him to sit down, and he presently consented to take some wine with us.

After all, however, he could not tell us much of his people which we had not heard before. A tradition existed among them, he said, that their ancestors had fled to these Alps from Marius, and that they had dwelt for a long time in the hollows and caves of the mountains, living and burying their dead in the same secret places. At what time they had been converted to Christianity he could not tell; they had, up to the beginning of the present century, had little or no intercourse with the Italian population by which they were surrounded on all sides. Formerly, they did not intermarry with that race, and it was seldom that any Cimbrian knew its language. But now intermarriage is very frequent; both Italian and Cimbrian are spoken in nearly all the families, and the Cimbrian is gradually falling into disuse. They still, however, have books of religious instruction in their ancient dialect, and until very lately the

services of their church were performed in Cimbrian.

I begged the Capo to show us some of their books, and he brought us two,—one a catechism for children, entitled, "*Dar Kloane Catechism vorn Beloseland vortraghet in z' gaprecht von siben Komünen, un vier Halghe Gasang.* 1842. Padova." The other book it grieved me to see, for it proved that I was not the only one tempted in recent times to visit these ancient people, ambitious to bear to them the relation of discoverer, as it were. A High-Dutch Columbus, from Vienna, had been before me, and I could only come in for Amerigo Vespucci's tempered glory. This German savant had dwelt a week in these lonely places, patiently compiling a dictionary of their tongue, which, when it was printed, he had sent to the Capo. I am magnanimous enough to give the name of his book, that the curious may buy it if they like. It is called "*Johann Andreas Schweller's Cimbrisches Wörterbuch.* Joseph Bergman. Vienna, 1855."

Concerning the present Cimbri, the Capo said that in his community they were chiefly hunters, wood-cutters, and charcoal-burners, and that they practised their primitive crafts

in those gloomier and wilder heights we saw to the northward, and descended to the towns of the plain to make sale of their fagots, charcoal, and wild-beast skins. In Asiago and the larger communities they were farmers and tradesmen like the Italians; and the Capo believed that the Cimbri, in all their villages, numbered near ten thousand. He could tell me of no particular customs or usages, and believed they did not differ from the Italians now except in race and language.[1] They are, of course,

[1] The English traveller Rose, who (to my further discomfiture, I find) visited Asiago in 1817, mentions that the Cimbri have the Celtic custom of *waking* the dead. "If a traveller dies by the way, they plant a cross upon the spot, and all who pass by cast a stone upon his cairn. Some go in certain seasons in the year to high places and woods, where it is supposed they worshipped their divinities, but the origin of the custom is forgot amongst themselves." If a man dies by violence, they lay him out with his hat and shoes on, as if to give him the appearance of a wayfarer, and "symbolise one surprised in the great journey of life." A woman dying in childbed is dressed for the grave in her bridal ornaments. Mr. Rose is very scornful of the notion that these people are Cimbri, and holds that it is "more consonant to all the evidence of history to say, that the flux and reflux of Teutonic invaders at different periods deposited this back-water of barbarians" in the district they now inhabit. "The whole space, which, in addition to the seven burghs,

subject to the Austrian Government, but not so strictly as the Italians are; and though they are taxed and made to do military service, they are otherwise left to regulate their affairs pretty much at their pleasure.

The Capo ended his discourse with much polite regret that he had nothing more worthy to tell us; and, as if to make us amends for having come so far to learn so little, he said there was a hermit living near, whom we might like to see, and sent his son to conduct us to the hermitage. It turned out to be the white object which we had seen gleaming in the wood on the mountain from so great distance below, and the wood turned out to be a pleasant beechen grove, in which we found the hermit cutting fagots. He was warmly dressed in clothes without rent, and wore the clerical knee-breeches. He saluted us with a cricket-like chirpiness of manner, and was greatly amazed to hear that we had come all the way from America to visit him. His hermitage was built upon the side of a white-washed chapel to St. Francis, and contained three or four little rooms or cupboards, in which the hermit

contains twenty-four villages, is bounded by rivers, alps, and hills. Its most precise limits are the Brenta to the east, and the Astico to the west."

dwelt and meditated. They opened into the chapel, of which the hermit had the care, and which he kept neat and clean like himself. He told us proudly that once a year, on the day of the titular saint, a priest came and said mass in that chapel, and it was easy to see that this was the great occasion of the old man's life. For forty years, he said, he had been devout; and for twenty-five he had dwelt in this place, where the goodness of God and the charity of the poor people around had kept him from want. Altogether, he was a pleasant enough hermit, not in the least spiritual, but gentle, simple, and evidently sincere. We gave some small coins of silver to aid him to continue his life of devotion, and Count Giovanni bestowed some coppers with the stately blessing, "*Iddio vi benedica, padre mio!*"

So we left the hermitage, left Fozza, and started down the mountain on foot, for no one may ride down those steeps. Long before we reached the bottom, we had learned to loathe mountains and to long for dead levels during the rest of life. Yet the descent was picturesque, and in some things even more interesting than the ascent had been. We met more people: now melancholy shepherds with their flocks; now

swine-herds and swine-herdesses with herds of wild black pigs of the Italian breed; now men driving asses that brayed and woke long, loud, and most musical echoes in the hills; now whole peasant families driving cows, horses, and mules to the plains below. On the way down, fragments of autobiography began, with the opportunities of conversation, to come from the Count Giovanni, and we learned that he was a private soldier at home on that *permesso* which the Austrian Government frequently gives its less able-bodied men in times of peace. He had been at home some years, and did not expect to be again called into the service. He liked much better to be in charge of the cave at Oliero than to carry the musket, though he confessed that he liked to see the world, and that soldiering brought one acquainted with many places. He had not many ideas, and the philosophy of his life chiefly regarded deportment toward strangers who visited the cave. He held it an error in most custodians to show discontent when travellers gave them little; and he said that if he received never so much, he believed it wise not to betray exultation. "Always be contented, and nothing more," said Count Giovanni.

"It is what you people always promise beforehand," I said, "when you bargain with strangers, to do them a certain service for what they please; but afterward they must pay what *you* please or have trouble. I know you will not be content with what I give you."

"If I am not content," cried Count Giovanni, "call me the greatest ass in the world!"

And I am bound to say that, for all I could see through the mask of his face, he was satisfied with what I gave him, though it was not much.

He had told us casually that he was nephew of a nobleman of a certain rich and ancient family in Venice, who sent him money while in the army, but this made no great impression on me; and though I knew there was enough noble poverty in Italy to have given rise to the proverb, *Un conte che non conta, non conta niente*, yet I confess that it was with a shock of surprise I heard our guide and servant saluted by a lounger in Valstagna with "*Sior conte, servitor suo!*" I looked narrowly at him, but there was no ray of feeling or pride visible in his pale, languid visage as he responded, "*Buona sera, caro.*"

Still, after that revelation we simple plebeians, who had been all day heaping shawls and guide-books upon Count Giovanni, demanding menial offices from him, and treating him with good-natured slight, felt uncomfortable in his presence, and welcomed the appearance of our carriage with our driver, who, having started drunk from Bassano in the morning, had kept drunk all day at Valstagna, and who now drove us back wildly over the road, and almost made us sigh for the security of mules ambitious of the brinks of precipices.

MINOR TRAVELS.

I.

PISA.

I AM afraid that the talk of the modern railway traveller, if he is honest, must be a great deal of the custodians, the vetturini, and the facchini, whose agreeable acquaintance constitutes his chief knowledge of the population among which he journeys. We do not nowadays carry letters recommending us to citizens of the different places. If we did, consider the calamity we should be to be-travelled Italian communities we now bless! No, we buy our through tickets, and we put up at the hotels praised in the hand-book, and are very glad of a little conversation with any native, however adulterated he be by contact with the world to which we belong. I do not blush to own that I love the whole rascal race which ministers to our curiosity and preys upon us, and I am not ashamed to have

spoken so often in this book of the lowly and rapacious but interesting porters who opened to me the different gates of that great realm of wonders, Italy. I doubt if they can be much known to the dwellers in the land, though they are the intimates of all sojourners and passengers; and if I have any regret in the matter, it is that I did not more diligently study them when I could. The opportunity once lost, seldom recurs; they are all but as transitory as the Object of Interest itself. I remember that years ago when I first visited Cambridge, there was an old man appeared to me in the character of Genius of the College Grounds, who showed me all the notable things in our city,—its treasures of art, its monuments,—and ended by taking me into his wood-house, and sawing me off from a wind-fallen branch of the Washington Elm a bit of the sacred wood for a remembrancer. Where now is that old man? He no longer exists for me, neither he nor his wood-house nor his dwelling-house. Let me look for a month about the College Grounds, and I shall not see him. But somewhere in the regions of traveller's faëry he still lives, and he appears instantly to the new-comer; he has an understanding with the dryads, who keep him supplied

with boughs from the Washington Elm, and his wood-house is full of them.

Among memorable custodians in Italy was one whom we saw at Pisa, where we stopped on our way from Leghorn after our accident in the Maremma, and spent an hour in viewing the Quattro Fabbriche. The beautiful old town, which every one knows from the report of travellers, one yet finds possessed of the incommunicable charm which keeps it for ever novel to the visitor. Lying upon either side of the broad Arno, it mirrors in the flood architecture almost as fair and noble as that glassed in the Canalazzo, and its other streets seemed as tranquil as the canals of Venice. Those over which we drove, on the day of our visit, were paved with broad flagstones, and gave cut scarcely a sound under our wheels. It was Sunday, and no one was to be seen. Yet the empty and silent city inspired us with no sense of desolation. The palaces were in perfect repair; the pavements were clean; behind those windows we felt that there must be a good deal of easy, comfortable life. It is said that Pisa is one of the few places in Europe where the sweet but timid spirit of Inexpensiveness—everywhere pursued by Railways—still lingers, and that you find

cheap apartments in those well-preserved old palaces. No doubt it would be worth more to live in Pisa than it would cost, for the history of the place would alone be to any reasonable sojourner a perpetual recompense and a princely income far exceeding his expenditure. To be sure, the Tower of Famine, with which we chiefly associate the name of Pisa, has been long razed to the ground, and built piecemeal into the neighbouring palaces, but you may still visit the dead wall which hides from view the place where it stood; and you may thence drive on, as we did, to the great Piazza where stands the unrivalledest group of architecture in the world, after that of St. Mark's Place in Venice. There is the wonderful Leaning Tower, there is the old and beautiful Duomo, there is the noble Baptistery, there is the lovely Campo-Santo, and there—somewhere lurking in portal or behind pillar, and keeping out an eagle eye for the marvelling stranger—is the much-experienced cicerone who shows you through the edifices. Yours is the fourteen-thousandth American family to which he has had the honour of acting as guide, and he makes you feel an illogical satisfaction in thus becoming a contribution to statistics.

We entered the Duomo, in our new friend's custody, and we saw the things which it was well to see. There was mass, or some other ceremony, transacting; but as usual it was made as little obtrusive as possible, and there was not much to weaken the sense of proprietorship with which travellers view objects of interest. Then we ascended the Leaning Tower, skilfully preserving its equilibrium as we went by an inclination, of our persons in a direction opposed to the tower's inclination, but perhaps not receiving a full justification of the Campanile's appearance in pictures, till we stood at its base, and saw its vast bulk and height as it seemed to sway and threaten in the blue sky above our heads. There the sensation was too terrible for endurance,—even the architectural beauty of the tower could not save it from being monstrous to us,—and we were glad to hurry away from it to the serenity and solemn loveliness of the Campo-Santo.

Here are the frescoes painted five hundred years ago to be ruinous and ready against the time of your arrival in 1864, and you feel that you are the first to enjoy the joke of the Vergognosa, that cunning jade who peers through her fingers at the shameful condition of deboshed father Noah, and

seems to wink one eye of wicked amusement at you. Turning afterward to any book written about Italy during the time specified, you find your impression of exclusive possession of the frescoes erroneous, and your muse naturally despairs, where so many muses have laboured in vain, to give a just idea of the Campo-Santo. Yet it is most worthy celebration. Those exquisitely arched and traceried colonnades seem to grow like the slim cypresses out of the sainted earth of Jerusalem; and those old paintings, made when Art was—if ever—a Soul, and not as now a mere Intelligence, enforce more effectively than their authors conceived the lessons of life and death; for they are themselves becoming part of the triumphant decay they represent. If it was awful once to look upon that strange scene where the gay lords and ladies of the chase come suddenly upon three dead men in their coffins, while the devoted hermits enjoy the peace of a dismal righteousness on a hill in the background, it is yet more tragic to behold it now when the dead men are hardly discernible in their coffins, and the hermits are but the vaguest shadows of gloomy bliss. Alas! Death mocks even the homage done him by our poor fears and hopes: with dust

he wipes out dust, and with decay he blots the image of decay.

I assure the reader that I made none of these apt reflections in the Campo-Santo at Pisa, but have written them out this morning in Cambridge because there happens to be an east wind blowing. No one could have been sad in the company of our cheerful and patient cicerone, who, although visibly anxious to get his fourteenth-thousandth American family away, still would not go till he had shown us that monument to a dead enmity which hangs in the Campo-Santo. This is the mighty chain which the Pisans, in their old wars with the Genoese, once stretched across the mouth of their harbour to prevent the entrance of the hostile galleys. The Genoese with no great trouble carried the chain away, and kept it ever afterward till 1860, when Pisa was united to the kingdom of Italy. Then the trophy was restored to the Pisans, and with public rejoicings placed in the Campo-Santo, an emblem of reconciliation and perpetual amity between ancient foes.[1] It is not a very good world,—*e pur si muove.*

[1] I read in Mr. Norton's *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy*, that he saw in the Campo-Santo, as long ago as 1856, "the chains that marked the servitude of

The Baptistery stands but a step away from the Campo-Santo, and our guide ushered us into it with the air of one who had till now held in reserve his great stroke and was ready to deliver it. Yet I think he waited till we had looked at some comparatively trifling sculptures by Nicolò Pisano before he raised his voice, and uttered a melodious species of howl. While we stood in some amazement at this, the conscious structure of the dome caught the sound and prolonged it with a variety and sweetness of which I could not have dreamed. The man poured out in quick succession his musical wails, and then ceased, and a choir of heavenly echoes burst forth in response. There was a supernatural beauty in these harmonies of which I despair of giving any true idea: they were of such tender and exalted rapture that we might well have thought them the voices of young-eyed cherubim, singing as they passed through Paradise over that spot of earth where we stood. They seemed a celestial

Pisa, now restored by Florence," and it is of course possible that our cicerone may have employed one of those chains for the different historical purpose I have mentioned. It would be a thousand pities, I think, if a monument of that sort should be limited to the commemoration of one fact only.

compassion that stooped and soothed, and rose again in lofty and solemn acclaim, leaving us poor and penitent and humbled.

We were long silent, and then broke forth with cries of admiration, of which the marvellous echo made eloquence.

"Did you ever," said the cicerone after we had left the building, "hear such music as that?"

"The papal choir does not equal it," we answered with one voice.

The cicerone was not to be silenced even with such a tribute, and he went on—

"Perhaps, as you are Americans, you know Moshu Feelmore, the President? No? Ah, what a fine man! You saw that he had his heart actually in his hand! Well, one day he said to me here, when I told him of the Baptistery echo, 'We have the finest echo in the world in the Hall of Congress.' I said nothing, but for answer I merely howled a little,—thus! Moshu Feelmore was convinced. Said he, 'There is no other echo in the world besides this. You are right.' I am unique," pursued the cicerone, "for making this echo. But," he added with a sigh, "it has been my ruin. The English have put me in all the guide-books, and sometimes I have to howl twenty

times a day. When our Victor Emanuel came here I showed him the church, the tower, and the Campo-Santo. Says the king, 'Pfui!'"—here the cicerone gave that sweeping outward motion with both hands by which Italians dismiss a trifling subject —"'make me the echo!' I was forced," concluded the cicerone with a strong sense of injury in his tone, "to howl half an hour without ceasing."

II.

THE FERRARA ROAD.

THE delight of one of our first journeys over the road between Padua and Ferrara was a Roman *cameriere* out of place, who got into the diligence at Ponte Lagoscuro. We were six in all: The Englishman who thought it particularly Italian to say "*Sì*" three times for every assent; the Veneto (as the citizen of the province calls himself, the native of the city being Veneziano) going home to his farm near Padua; the German lady of a sour and dreadful countenance; our two selves, and the Roman *cameriere*. The last was worth all the rest —being a man of vast general information acquired in the course of service with families of all nations, and agreeably communicative. A brisk and lively little man, with dancing eyes, beard cut to the mode of the Emperor Napoleon, and the impressive habit of tapping himself on the teeth with his railroad-guide, and lifting his eyebrows

when he says anything specially worthy of remark. He, also, long after the conclusion of an observation, comes back to himself approvingly, with "*Sì!*" "*Va bene!*" "*Ecco!*" He speaks beautiful Italian and constantly, and in a little while we know that he was born at Ferrara, bred at Venice, and is now a citizen of Rome. "St. Peter's, Signori,—have you ever seen it?—is the first church of the world. At Ferrara lived Tasso and Ariosto. Venice is a lovely city. Ah! what beauty! But unique. My second country. *Sì, Signori, la mia seconda patria.*" After a pause, "*Va bene.*"

We hint to him that he is extremely fortunate in having so many countries, and that it will be difficult to exile so universal a citizen, which he takes as a tribute to his worth, smiles and says, "*Ecco!*"

Then he turns to the Veneto, and describes to him the English manner of living. "Wonderfully well they eat—the English. Four times a day. With rosbif at the dinner. Always, always, always! And tea in the evening, with rosbif cold. *Mangiano sempre. Ma bene, dico.*" After a pause, "*Sì!*" "And the Venetians, they eat well, too. Whence the proverb: '*Sulla Riva degli Schiavoni, si mangiano bei bocconi.*'

('On the Riva degli Schiavoni, you eat fine mouthfuls.') Signori, I am going to Venice," concludes the *cameriere*.

He is the politest man in the world, and the most attentive to ladies. The German lady has not spoken a word, possibly not knowing the language. Our good *cameriere* cannot bear this, and commiserates her weariness with noble elegance and originality. "*La Signora si trova un poco sagrificata?*" ("The lady feels slightly sacrificed!") We all smile, and the little man very gladly with us.

"An elegant way of expressing it," we venture to suggest. The Veneto roars and roars again, and we all shriek, none louder than the Roman himself. We never can get over that idea of being slightly sacrificed, and it lasts us the whole way to Padua; and when the Veneto gets down at his farm-gate, he first "reverences" us, and then says, "I am very sorry for you others who must be still more slightly sacrificed."

At Venice, a week or two later, I meet our *cameriere*. He is not so gay, quite, as he was, and I fancy that he has not found so many *bei bocconi* on the Riva degli Schiavoni, as the proverb and a sanguine temperament led him to expect. Do I happen to

know, he asks, any American family going to Rome and desiring a *cameriere?*

As I write, the Spring is coming in Cambridge, and I cannot help thinking, with a little heartache, of how the Spring came to meet us once as we rode southward from Venice toward Florence on that road from Padua to Ferrara. It had been May for some time in Tuscany, and all through the wide plains of Venetia this was the railroad landscape: fields tilled and tended as jealously as gardens, and waving in wheat, oats, and grass, with here and there the hay cut already, and here and there acres of Indian corn. The green of the fields was all dashed with the bloody red of poppies; the fig-trees hung full of half-grown fruit; the orchards were garlanded with vines, which they do not bind to stakes in Italy, but train from tree to tree, leaving them to droop in festoons and sway in the wind, with the slender native grace of vines. Huge stone farm-houses shelter under the same roof the family and all the live stock of the farm; thatched cottages, thickly dotting the fields, send forth to their cultivation the most picturesque peasants,—men and women, pretty young girls in broad hats, and wonderful old

brown and crooked crones, who seem never to have been younger nor fairer. Country roads, level, straight, and white, stretch away on either hand, and the constant files of poplars escort them wherever they go. All about, the birds sing, and the butterflies dance. The milk-white oxen dragging the heavy carts turn up their patient heads, with wide-spreading horns and mellow eyes, at the passing train; the sunburnt lout behind them suspends the application of the goad; unwonted acquiescence stirs in the bosom of the firm-minded donkey, and even the matter-of-fact locomotive seems to linger as lovingly as a locomotive may along these plains of Spring.

At Padua we take a carriage for Ponte Lagoscuro, and having fought the customary battle with the vetturino before arriving at the terms of contract; having submitted to the successive pillage of the man who had held our horses a moment, of the man who tied on the trunk, and of the man who hovered obligingly about the carriage, and desired to drink our health — with prodigious smacking of whip, and banging of wheels, we rattle out of the Stella d'Oro, and set forth from the gate of the old city.

I confess that I like posting. There is a freedom and a fine sense of proprietorship in that mode of travel, combined with sufficient speed, which you do not feel on the railroad. For twenty francs and *buona mano*, I had bought my carriage and horses and driver for the journey of forty miles, and I began to look round on the landscape with a cumulative feeling of ownership in everything I saw. For me, old women spinning in old-world fashion, with distaff and spindle, flax as white as their own hair, came to roadside doors, or moved back and forth under orchard trees. For me, the peasants toiled in the fields together, wearing for my sake wide straw hats, or gay ribbons, or red caps. The white oxen were willing to mass themselves in effective groups, as the ploughman turned the end of his furrow; young girls especially appointed themselves to lead horses to springs as we passed; children had larger eyes and finer faces, and played more about the cottage doors, on account of our posting. As for the vine-garlanded trees in the orchards, and the opulence of the endless fertile plain; the white distance of the road before us with its guardian poplars, —I doubt if people in a diligence could have got so much of these things as we. Cer-

tainly they could not have had all to themselves the lordly splendour with which we dashed through gaping villages, taking the street from everybody, and fading magnificently away upon the road.

III.

TRIESTE.

IF you take the midnight steamer at Venice, you reach Trieste by six o'clock in the morning, and the hills rise to meet you as you enter the broad bay dotted with the sail of fishing-craft. The hills are bald and bare, and you find, as you draw near, that the city lies at their feet under a veil of mist, or climbs earlier into view along their sides. The prospect is singularly devoid of gentle and pleasing features, and looking at those rugged acclivities, with their aspect of continual bleakness, you readily believe all the stories you have heard of that fierce wind called the Bora, which sweeps from them through Trieste at certain seasons. While it blows, ladies walking near the quays are sometimes caught up and set afloat, involuntary Galateas, in the bay, and people keep indoors as much as possible. But the Bora, though so sudden and so savage, does give warning of its rise, and the

peasants avail themselves of this characteristic. They station a man on one of the mountain-tops, and when he feels the first breath of the Bora, he sounds a horn, which is a signal for all within hearing to lay hold of something that cannot be blown away, and cling to it till the wind falls. This may happen in three days or in nine, according to the popular proverbs. "The spectacle of the sea," says Dall' Ongaro, in a note to one of his ballads, "while the Bora blows, is sublime, and when it ceases the prospect of the surrounding hills is delightful. The air, purified by the rapid current, clothes them with a rosy veil, and the temperature is instantly softened, even in the heart of winter."

The city itself, as you penetrate it, makes good with its stateliness and picturesqueness your loss through the grimness of its environs. It is in great part new, very clean, and full of the life and movement of a prosperous port; but, better than this, so far as the mere sightseer is concerned, it wins a novel charm from the many public staircases by which you ascend and descend its hillier quarters, and which are made of stone, and lightly railed and balustraded with iron.

Something of all this I noticed in my ride

from the landing of the steamer to the house of friends in the suburbs, and there I grew better disposed toward the hills, which, as I strolled over them, I found dotted with lovely villas, and everywhere traversed by perfectly kept carriage-roads, and easy and pleasant foot-paths. It was in the spring-time, and the peach-trees and almond-trees hung full of blossoms and bees, the lizards lay in the walks absorbing the vernal sunshine, the violets and cowslips sweetened all the grassy borders. The scene did not want a human interest, for the peasant girls were going to market at that hour, and I met them everywhere, bearing heavy burdens on their own heads, or hurrying forward with their wares on the backs of donkeys. They were as handsome as heart could wish, and they wore that Italian costume which is not to be seen anywhere in Italy except at Trieste and in the Roman and Neapolitan provinces,—a bright bodice and gown, with the head-dress of dazzling white linen, square upon the crown, and dropping lightly to the shoulders. Later I saw these comely maidens crouching on the ground in the market-place, and selling their wares, with much glitter of eyes, teeth, and earrings, and a continual babble of bargaining.

It seemed to me that the average of good looks was greater among the women of Trieste than among those of Venice, but that the instances of striking and exquisite beauty were rarer. At Trieste, too, the Italian type, so pure at Venice, is lost or continually modified by the mixed character of the population, which perhaps is most noticeable at the Merchants' Exchange. This is a vast edifice roofed with glass, where are the offices of the great steam navigation company, the Austrian Lloyds,—which, far more than the favour of the Imperial Government, has contributed to the prosperity of Trieste,—and where the traffickers of all races meet daily to gossip over the news and the prices. Here a Greek or Dalmat talks with an eager Italian or a slow, sure Englishman; here the hated Austrian button-holes the Venetian or the Magyar; here the Jew meets the Gentile on common ground; here Christianity encounters the hoary superstitions of the East, and makes a good thing out of them in cotton or grain. All costumes are seen here, and all tongues are heard, the native Triestines contributing almost as much to the variety of the latter as the foreigners. "In regard to language," says Cantù, "though the country is peopled by

Slavonians, yet the Italian tongue is spreading into the remotest villages where a few years since it was not understood. In the city it is the common and familiar language; the Slavonians of the North use the German for the language of ceremony; those of the South, as well as the Israelites, the Italian; while the Protestants use the German, the Greeks the Hellenic and Illyric, the *employés* of the civil courts the Italian or the German, the schools now German and now Italian, the bar and the pulpit Italian. Most of the inhabitants, indeed, are bi-lingual, and very many tri-lingual, without counting French, which is understood and spoken from infancy. Italian, German, and Greek are written, but the Slavonic little, this having remained in the condition of a vulgar tongue. But it would be idle to distinguish the population according to language, for the son adopts a language different from the father's, and now prefers one language and now another; the women incline to the Italian; but those of the upper class prefer now German, now French, now English, as, from one decade to another, affairs, fashions, and fancies change. This in the salons; in the squares and streets, the Venetian dialect is heard."

And with the introduction of the Venetian dialect, Venetian discontent seems also to have crept in, and I once heard a Triestine declaim against the Imperial Government quite in the manner of Venice. It struck me that this desire for union with Italy, which he declared prevalent in Trieste, must be of very recent growth: since even so late as 1848, Trieste had refused to join Venice in the expulsion of the Austrians. Indeed, the Triestines have fought the Venetians from the first; they stole the Brides of Venice in one of their piratical cruises in the lagoons; gave aid and comfort to those enemies of Venice, the Visconti, the Carraras, and the Genoese; revolted from St. Mark whenever subjected to his banner, and finally, rather than remain under his sway, gave themselves five centuries ago to Austria.

The objects of interest in Trieste are not many. There are remains of an attributive temple of Jupiter under the Duomo, and there is near at hand the Museum of Classical Antiquities founded in honour of Winckelmann, murdered at Trieste by that ill-advised Pistojese, Ancangeli, who had seen the medals bestowed on the antiquary by Maria Theresa, and believed him rich. There is also a scientific museum founded by the

Archduke Maximilian, and, above all, there is the beautiful residence of that ill-starred prince,—the Miramare, where the half-crazed Empress of the Mexicans vainly waits her husband's return from the experiment of paternal government in the New World. It would be hard to tell how Art has charmed rock and wave at Miramare, until the spur of one of those rugged Triestine hills, jutting into the sea, has been made the seat of ease and luxury, but the visitor is aware of the magic as soon as he passes the gate of the palace grounds. These are in great part perpendicular, and are over-clambered with airy stairways climbing to pensile arbours. Where horizontal, they are diversified with mimic seas for swans to sail upon, and summer-houses for people to lounge in and look at the swans from. On the point of land furthest from the acclivity stands the Castle of Miramare, half at sea, and half adrift in the clouds above :—

> "And fain it would stoop downward
> To the mirrored wave below;
> And fain it would soar upward
> In the evening's crimson glow."

I remember that a little yacht lay beside the pier at the castle's foot, and lazily flapped its sail, while the sea beat inward

with as languid a pulse. That was some years ago, before Mexico was dreamed of at Miramare: now, perchance, she who is one of the most unhappy among women looks down distraught from those high windows, and finds in the helpless sail and impassive wave the images of her baffled hope, and that immeasurable sea which gives back its mariners neither to love nor sorrow. I think, though she be the wife and daughter of princes, we may pity this poor Empress, at least as much as we pity the Mexicans to whom her dreams have brought so many woes.

It was the midnight following my visit to Miramare when the fiacre in which I had quitted my friend's house was drawn up by its greatly bewildered driver on the quay near the place where the steamer for Venice should be lying. There was no steamer for Venice to be seen. The driver swore a little in the polyglot profanities of his native city, and, descending from his box, went and questioned different lights—blue lights, yellow lights, green lights—to be seen at different points. To a light, they were ignorant, though eloquent, and to pass the time we drove up and down the quay, and stopped at the landings of all the

steamers that touch at Trieste. It was a snug fiacre enough, but I did not care to spend the night in it, and I urged the driver to further inquiry. A wanderer whom we met, declared that it was not the night for the Venice steamer; another admitted that it might be; a third conversed with the driver in low tones, and then leaped upon the box. We drove rapidly away, and before I had, in view of this mysterious proceeding, composed a fitting paragraph for the *Fatti Diversi* of the *Osservatore Triestino*, descriptive of the state in which the Guardie di Polizia should find me floating in the bay, exanimate and evidently the prey of a *triste evvenimento*—the driver pulled up once more, and now beside a steamer. It was the steamer for Venice, he said, in precisely the tone which he would have used had he driven me directly to it without blundering. It was breathing heavily, and was just about to depart, but even in the hurry of getting on board, I could not help noticing that it seemed to have grown a great deal since I had last voyaged in it. There was not a soul to be seen except the mute steward who took my satchel, and, guiding me below into an elegant saloon, instantly

left me alone. Here again the steamer was vastly enlarged. These were not the narrow quarters of the Venice steamer, nor was this lamp, shedding a soft light on cushioned seats and panelled doors and wainscotings the sort of illumination usual in that humble craft. I rang the small silver bell on the long table, and the mute steward appeared.

Was this the steamer for Venice?

Sicuro!

All that I could do in comment was to sit down; and in the meantime the steamer trembled, groaned, choked, cleared its throat, and we were under weigh.

"The other passengers have all gone to bed, I suppose," I argued acutely, seeing none of them. Nevertheless I thought it odd, and it seemed a shrewd means of relief to ring the bell, and, pretending drowsiness, to ask the steward which was my state-room.

He replied with a curious smile that I could have any of them. Amazed, I yet selected a state-room, and, while the steward was gone for the sheets and pillow-cases, I occupied my time by opening the doors of all the other state-rooms. They were empty.

"Am I the only passenger?" I asked, when he returned, with some anxiety.

"Precisely," he answered.

I could not proceed and ask if he composed the entire crew—it seemed too fearfully probable that he did.

I now suspected that I had taken passage with the *Olandese Volante*. There was nothing in the world for it, however, but to go to bed, and there, with the accession of a slight sea-sickness, my views of the situation underwent a total change. I had gone down into the Maelstrom with the Ancient Mariner —I was a Manuscript Found in a Bottle!

Coming to the surface about six o'clock A.M., I found a daylight as cheerful as need be upon the appointments of the elegant cabin, and upon the good-natured face of the steward when he brought me the *caffè latte* and the buttered toast for my breakfast. He said "*Servitor suo!*" in a loud and comfortable voice, and I perceived the absurdity of having thought that he was in any way related to the Nightmare-Death-in-life-that-thicks-man's-blood-with-cold.

"This is not the regular Venice steamer, I suppose," I remarked to the steward as he laid my breakfast in state upon the long table.

No. Properly, no boat should have left for Venice last night, which was not one of the times of the tri-weekly departure. This was one of the steamers of the line between Trieste and Alexandria, and it was going at present to take on an extraordinary freight at Venice for Egypt. I had been permitted to come on board because my driver said I had a return ticket, and would go.

Ascending to the deck I found nothing whatever mysterious in the management of the steamer. The captain met me with a bow in the gangway; seamen were coiling wet ropes at different points, as they always are; the mate was promenading the bridge, and taking the rainy weather as it came, with his oil-cloth coat and hat on. The wheel of the steamer was as usual chewing the sea, and finding it unpalatable, and making vain efforts at expectoration.

We were in sight of the breakwater outside Malamocco, and a pilot-boat was making us from the land. Even at this point the innumerable fortifications of the Austrians began, and they multiplied as we drew near Venice, till we entered the lagoon, and found it a nest of fortresses one with another.

Unhappily the day being rainy, Venice did not spring resplendent from the sea, as

I had always read she would. She rose slowly and languidly from the water,—not like a queen, but like the grey, slovenly, bedrabbled, heart-broken old slave she really was.

IV.

BASSANO.

I HAVE already told, in recounting the story of our visit to the Cimbri, how full of courtship we found the little city of Bassano on the evening of our arrival there. Bassano is the birthplace of the painter Jacopo da Ponte, who was one of the first Italian painters to treat Scriptural story as accessory to mere landscape, and who had a peculiar fondness for painting Entrances into the Ark, for in these he could indulge without stint the taste for pairing-off early acquired from observation of local customs in his native town. This was the theory offered by one who had imbibed the spirit of subtle speculation from Ruskin, and I think it reasonable. At least it does not conflict with the fact that there is at Bassano a most excellent gallery of paintings entirely devoted to the works of Jacopo da Ponte, and his four sons, who are here to be seen to better advantage than anywhere

else. As few strangers visit Bassano, the gallery is little frequented. It is in charge of a very strict old man, who will not allow people to look at the pictures till he has shown them the adjoining cabinet of geological specimens. It is in vain that you assure him of your indifference to these scientific *seccature;* he is deaf, and you are not suffered to escape a single fossil. He asked us a hundred questions, and understood nothing in reply, insomuch that when he came to his last inquiry, "Have the Protestants the same God as the Catholics?" we were rather glad that he should be obliged to settle the fact for himself.

Underneath the gallery was a school of boys, whom as we entered we heard humming over the bitter honey which childhood is obliged to gather from the opening flowers of orthography. When we passed out the master gave these poor busy bees an atom of holiday, and they all swarmed forth together to look at the strangers. The teacher was a long, lank man, in a black threadbare coat and a skull-cap — exactly like the schoolmaster in *The Deserted Village.* We made a pretence of asking him our way to somewhere, and went wrong, and came by accident upon a wide flat space, bare as

a brick-yard, beside which was lettered on a fragment of the old city wall, "Giuoco di Palla." It was evidently the playground of the whole city, and it gave us a pleasanter idea of life in Bassano than we had yet conceived, to think of its entire population playing ball there in the spring afternoons. We respected Bassano as much for this as for her diligent remembrance of her illustrious dead, of whom she has very great numbers. It appeared to us that nearly every other house bore a tablet announcing that "Here was born," or "Here died," some great or good man of whom no one out of Bassano ever heard. There is enough celebrity in Bassano to supply the world; but as laurel is a thing that grows anywhere, I covet rather from Bassano the magnificent ivy that covers the portions of her ancient wall yet standing. The wall, where visible, is seen to be of a pebbly rough-cast, but it is clad almost from the ground in glossy ivy, that glitters upon it like chain-mail upon the vast shoulders of some giant warrior. The moat beneath is turned into a lovely promenade bordered by quiet villas, with rococo shepherds and shepherdesses in marble on their gates; where the wall is built to the verge of the high ground on which the city

stands, there is a swift descent to the wide valley of the Brenta, waving in corn and vines and tobacco.

We went up the Brenta one day as far as Oliero, to visit the famous cavern already mentioned, out of which, from the secret heart of the hill, gushes one of the foamy affluents of the river. It is reached by passing through a paper-mill, fed by the stream, and then through a sort of ante-grot, whence stepping-stones are laid in the brawling current through a succession of natural compartments with dome-like roofs. From the hill overhead hang stalactites of all grotesque and fairy shapes, and the rock underfoot is embroidered with fantastic designs wrought by the water in the silence and darkness of the endless night. At a considerable distance from the mouth of the cavern is a wide lake, with a boat upon it, and voyaging to the centre of the pool your attention is drawn to the dome above you, which contracts into a shaft rising upward to a height as yet unmeasured, and even unpierced by light. From somewhere in its mysterious ascent, an auroral boy, with a tallow candle, produces a so-called effect of sunrise, and sheds a sad, disheartening radiance on the lake and the cavern sides,

which is to sunlight about as the blind creatures of subterranean waters are to those of waves that laugh and dance above ground. But all caverns are much alike in their depressing and gloomy influences, and since there is so great opportunity to be wretched on the surface of the earth, why do people visit them? I do not know that this is more dispiriting or its stream more Stygian than another.

The wicked memory of the Eccelini survives everywhere in this part of Italy, and near the entrance of the Oliero grotto is a hollow in the hill something like the apsis of a church, which is popularly believed to have been the hiding-place of Cecilia da Baone, one of the many unhappy wives of one of the many miserable members of the Eccelino family. It is not quite clear when Cecilia should have employed this as a place of refuge, and it is certain that she was not the wife of Eccelino da Romano, as the neighbours believe at Oliero, but of Eccelino il Monaco, his father; yet since her name is associated with the grot, let us have her story, which is curiously illustrative of the life of the best society in Italy during the thirteenth century. She was the only daughter of the rich and potent lord, Manfredo, Count of

Baone and Abano, who died leaving his heiress to the guardianship of Spinabello da Xendrico. When his ward reached womanhood, Spinabello cast about him to find a suitable husband for her, and it appeared to him that a match with the son of Tiso du Camposampiero promised the greatest advantages. Tiso, to whom he proposed the affair, was delighted, but desiring first to take counsel with his friends upon so important a matter, he confided it for advice to his brother-in-law and closest intimate, Eccelino Balbo. It had just happened that Balbo's son, Eccelino il Monaco, was at that moment disengaged, having been recently divorced from his first wife, the lovely but light Speronella; and Balbo falsely went to the greedy guardian of Cecilia, and, offering him better terms than he could hope for from Tiso, secured Cecilia for his son. At this treachery the Camposampieri were furious; but they dissembled their anger till the moment of revenge arrived, when Cecilia's rejected suitor, encountering her upon a journey beyond the protection of her husband, violently dishonoured his successful rival. The unhappy lady, returning to Eccelino at Bassano, recounted her wrong, and was with a horrible injustice repudiated

and sent home, while her husband arranged schemes of vengeance, in due time consummated. Cecilia next married a Venetian noble, and, being in due time divorced, married yet again, and died the mother of a large family of children.

This is a very old scandal, yet I think there was an *habitué* of the caffè in Bassano who could have given some of its particulars from personal recollection. He was an old and smoothly shaven gentleman, in a scrupulously white waistcoat, whom we saw every evening in a corner of the caffè playing solitaire. He talked with no one, saluted no one. He drank his glasses of water with anisette, and silently played solitaire. There is no good reason to doubt that he had been doing the same thing every evening for six hundred years.

V.

POSSAGNO, CANOVA'S BIRTHPLACE.

IT did not take a long time to exhaust the interest of Bassano, but we were sorry to leave the place because of the excellence of the inn at which we tarried. It was called "Il Mondo," and it had everything in it that heart could wish. Our rooms were miracles of neatness and comfort; they had the freshness, not the rawness, of recent repair, and they opened into the dining-hall, where we were served with indescribable salads and risotti. During our sojourn we simply enjoyed the house; when we were come away we wondered that so much perfection of hotel could exist in so small a town as Bassano. It is one of the pleasures of by-way travel in Italy, that you are everywhere introduced in character, that you become fictitious and play a part as in a novel. To this inn of The World, our driver had brought us with a clamour and rattle proportioned to the fee received from us,

and when, in response to his haughty summons, the *cameriere*, who had been gossiping with the cook, threw open the kitchen door, and stood out to welcome us in a broad square of forth-streaming ruddy light, amid the lovely odours of broiling and roasting, our driver saluted him with, "Receive these gentle folks, and treat them to your very best. They are worthy of anything." This at once put us back several centuries, and we never ceased to be lords and ladies of the period of Don Quixote as long as we rested in that inn.

It was a bright and breezy Sunday when we left "Il Mondo," and gaily journeyed toward Treviso, intending to visit Possagno, the birthplace of Canova, on our way. The road to the latter place passes through a beautiful country, that gently undulates on either hand till in the distance it rises into pleasant hills and green mountain heights. Possagno itself lies upon the brink of a declivity, down the side of which drops terrace after terrace, all planted with vines and figs and peaches, to a watercourse below. The ground on which the village is built, with its quaint and antiquated stone cottages, slopes gently northward, and on a little rise upon the left hand of us coming from Bassano, we saw that stately edifice with which Canova

has honoured his humble birthplace. It is a copy of the Pantheon, and it cannot help being beautiful and imposing, but it would be utterly out of place in any other than an Italian village. Here, however, it consorted well enough with the lingering qualities of the old pagan civilisation still perceptible in Italy. A sense of that past was so strong with us as we ascended the broad stairway leading up the slope from the village to the level on which the temple stands at the foot of a mountain, that we might well have believed we approached an altar devoted to the elder worship: through the open doorway and between the columns of the portico we could see the priests moving to and fro, and the voice of their chanting came out to us like the sound of hymns to some of the deities long disowned; and I remembered how Padre L—— had said to me in Venice, "Our blessed saints are only the old gods baptized and christened anew." Within as without, the temple resembled the Pantheon, but it had little to show us. The niches designed by Canova for statues of the saints are empty yet; but there are busts by his own hand of himself and his brother, the Bishop Canova. Among the people was the sculptor's niece, whom our guide pointed out

to us, and who was evidently used to being looked at. She seemed not to dislike it, and stared back at us amiably enough, being a good-natured, plump, comely dark-faced lady of perhaps fifty years.

Possagno is nothing if not Canova, and our guide, a boy, knew all about him,—how, more especially, he had first manifested his wonderful genius by modelling a group of sheep out of the dust of the highway, and how an Inglese, happening along in his carriage, saw the boy's work and gave him a plateful of gold napoleons. I daresay this is as near the truth as most facts. And is it not better for the historic Canova to have begun in this way than to have poorly picked up the rudiments of his art in the workshop of his father, a maker of altar-pieces and the like for country churches? The Canova family has intermarried with the Venetian nobility, and will not credit those stories of Canova's beginnings which his townsmen so fondly cherish. I believe they would even distrust the butter lion with which the boy-sculptor is said to have adorned the table of the noble Falier, and first won his notice.

Besides the temple at Possagno, there is a very pretty gallery containing casts of all Canova's works. It is an interesting place,

where Psyches and Cupids flutter, where Venuses present themselves in every variety of attitude, where Sorrows sit upon hard, straight-backed classic chairs, and mourn in the society of faithful Storks; where the Bereft of this century surround deathbeds in Greek costume appropriate to the scene; where Muses and Graces sweetly pose themselves and insipidly smile, and where the Dancers and Passions, though nakeder, are no wickeder than the Saints and Virtues. In all, there are a hundred and ninety-five pieces in the gallery, and among the rest the statue named George Washington, which was sent to America in 1820, and afterwards destroyed by fire in the Capitol. The figure is in a sitting posture; naturally, it is in the dress of a Roman general; and if it does not look much like George Washington, it does resemble Julius Cæsar.

The custodian of the gallery had been Canova's body-servant, and he loved to talk of his master. He had so far imbibed the family spirit that he did not like to allow that Canova had ever been other than rich and grand, and he begged us not to believe the idle stories of his first essays in art. He was delighted with our interest in the imperial Washington, and our pleasure in

the whole gallery, which we viewed with the homage due to the man who had rescued the world from swaggering in sculpture. When we were satisfied, he invited us, with his mistress's permission, into the house of the Canovas adjoining the gallery; and there we saw many paintings by the sculptor,—pausing longest in a lovely little room decorated after the Pompeian manner with *scherzi* in miniature panels representing the jocose classic usualities: Cupids escaping from cages, and being sold from them, and playing many pranks and games with Nymphs and Graces.

Then Canova was done, and Possagno was finished; and we resumed our way to Treviso, a town nearly as much porticoed as Padua, and having a memory and hardly any other consciousness. The Duomo, which is perhaps the ugliest duomo in the world, contains an "Annunciation," by Titian, one of his best paintings; and in the Monte di Pietà is the grand and beautiful "Entombment," by which Giorgione is perhaps most worthily remembered. The church of San Nicolò is interesting from its quaint and pleasing frescoes by the school of Giotto. At the railway station an admirable old man sells the most delicious white and purple grapes.

VI.

COMO.

MY visit to Lake Como has become to me a dream of summer,—a vision that remains faded the whole year round, till the blazing heats of July bring out the sympathetic tints in which it was vividly painted. Then I behold myself again in burning Milan, amidst noises and fervours and bustle that seem intolerable after my first six months in tranquil, cool, mute Venice. Looking at the great white Cathedral, with its infinite pinnacles piercing the cloudless blue, and gathering the fierce sun upon it, I half expect to see the whole mass calcined by the heat, and crumbling, statue by statue, finial by finial, arch by arch, into a vast heap of lime on the Piazza, with a few charred English tourists blackening here and there upon the ruin, and contributing a smell of burnt leather and Scotch tweed to the horror of the scene. All round Milan smokes the great Lombard plain, and to the North rises

Monte Rosa, her dark head coifed with tantalising snows as with a peasant's white linen kerchief. And I am walking out upon that fuming plain as far as to the Arco della Pace, on which the bronze horses may melt any minute; or I am sweltering through the city's noonday streets, in search of Sant' Ambrogio, or the Cenacolo of Da Vinci, or what know I? Coming back to our hotel, "Alla Bella Venezia," and greeted on entering by the immense fresco which covers one whole side of the court, it appeared to my friend and me no wonder that Garibaldi should look so longingly from the prow of a gondola toward the airy towers and balloon-like domes that swim above the unattainable lagoons of Venice, where the Austrian then lorded it in coolness and quietness, while hot, red-shirted Italy was shut out upon the dusty plains and stony hills. Our desire for water became insufferable; we paid our modest bills, and at six o'clock we took the train for Como, where we arrived about the hour when Don Abbondio, walking down the lonely path with his book of devotions in his hand, gave himself to the Devil on meeting the bravoes of Don Rodrigo. I counsel the reader to turn to *I Promessi Sposi*, if he would know how all the lovely

Como country looks at that hour. For me, the ride through the evening landscape, and the faint sentiment of pensiveness provoked by the smell of the ripening maize, which exhales the same sweetness on the way to Como that it does on any Ohio bottom-land, have given me an appetite, and I am to dine before wooing the descriptive Muse.

After dinner, we find at the door of the hotel an English architect whom we know, and we take a boat together for a moonlight row upon the lake, and voyage far up the placid water through air that bathes our heated senses like dew. How far we have left Milan behind! On the lake lies the moon, but the hills are held by mysterious shadows, which for the time are as substantial to us as the hills themselves. Hints of habitation appear in the twinkling lights along the water's edge, and we suspect an alabaster lamp in every casement, and in every invisible house a villa such as Claude Melnotte described to Pauline,—and some one mouths that well-worn fustian. The rags of sentimentality flutter from every crag and olive-tree and orange-tree in all Italy—like the wilted paper collars which vulgar tourists leave by our own mountains

and streams, to commemorate their enjoyment of the landscape.

The town of Como lies, a swarm of lights, behind us; the hills and shadows gloom around; the lake is a sheet of tremulous silver. There is no telling how we get back to our hotel, or with what satisfied hearts we fall asleep in our room there. The steamer starts for the head of the lake at eight o'clock in the morning, and we go on board at that hour.

There is some pretence of shelter in the awning stretched over the after-part of the boat; but we do not feel the need of it in the fresh morning air, and we get as near the bow as possible, that we may be the very first to enjoy the famous beauty of the scenes opening before us. A few sails dot the water, and everywhere there are small, canopied row-boats, such as we went pleasuring in last night. We reach a bend in the lake, and all the roofs and towers of the city of Como pass from view, as if they had been so much architecture painted on a scene and shifted out of sight at a theatre. But other roofs and towers constantly succeed them, not less lovely and picturesque than they, with every curve of the many-curving lake. We advance over charming expanses of water lying between lofty hills; and as the

lake is narrow, the voyage is like that of a winding river,—like that of the Ohio, but for the primeval wildness of the acclivities that guard our Western stream, and the tawniness of its current. Wherever the hills do not descend sheer into Como, a pretty town nestles on the brink, or, if not a town, then a villa, or else a cottage, if there is room for nothing more. Many little towns climb the heights half way, and where the hills are green and cultivated in vines or olives, peasants' houses scale them to the crest. They grow loftier and loftier as we leave our starting-place farther behind, and as we draw near Colico they wear light wreaths of cloud and snow. So cool a breeze has drawn down between them all the way that we fancy it to have come from them till we stop at Colico, and find that, but for the efforts of our honest engine, sweating and toiling in the dark below, we should have had no current of air. A burning calm is in the atmosphere, and on the broad, flat valley,—out of which a marshy stream oozes into the lake,—and on the snow-crowned hills upon the left, and on the dirty village of Colico upon the right, and on the indolent beggars waiting to welcome us, and sunning their goitres at the landing.

The name Colico, indeed, might be literally taken in English as descriptive of the local insalubrity. The place was once large, but it has fallen away much from sickness, and we found a bill posted in its public places inviting emigrants to America on the part of a German steamship company. It was the only advertisement of the kind I ever saw in Italy, and I judged that the people must be notoriously discontented there to make it worth the while of a steamship company to tempt from home any of the home-keeping Italian race. And yet Colico, though undeniably hot, and openly dirty, and tacitly unhealthy, had merits, though the dinner we got there was not among its virtues. It had an accessible country about it; that is, its woods and fields were not impenetrably walled in from the vagabond foot; and after we had dined we went and lay down under some greenly waving trees beside a field of corn, and heard the plumed and panoplied maize talking to itself of its kindred in America. It always has a welcome for tourists of our nation wherever it finds us in Italy; and sometimes its sympathy, expressed in a rustling and clashing of its long green blades, or in its strong sweet perfume, has, as already hinted, made

me home-sick, though I have been uniformly unaffected by potato-patches and tobacco-fields. If only the maize could impart to the Italian cooks the beautiful mystery of roasting-ears! Ah! then indeed it might claim a full and perfect fraternisation from its compatriots abroad.

From where we lay beside the corn-field, we could see, through the twinkling leaves and the twinkling atmosphere, the great hills across the lake, taking their afternoon naps, with their clouds drawn like handkerchiefs over their heads. It was very hot, and the red and purple ooze of the unwholesome river below "burnt like a witch's oils." It was indeed but a fevered joy we snatched from Nature there; and I am afraid that we got nothing more comfortable from sentiment, when, rising, we wandered off through the unguarded fields towards a ruined tower on a hill. It must have been a relic of feudal times, and I could easily believe it had been the hold of one of those wicked lords who used to rule in the terror of the people beside peaceful and happy Como. But the life, good or bad, was utterly gone out of it now, and what was left of the tower was a burden to the sense. A few scrawny blackberries and other brambles grew out of its

fallen stones; harsh, dust-dry mosses painted its weather-worn walls with their blanched grey and yellow. From its foot, looking out over the valley, we saw the road to the Splügen Pass lying white-hot in the valley; and while we looked, the diligence appeared, and dashed through the dust that rose like a flame before. After that it was a relief to stroll in dirty by-ways, past cottages of saffron peasants, and poor stony fields that begrudged them a scanty vegetation, back to the steamer blistering in the sun.

Now indeed we were glad of the awning, under which a silent crowd of people with sunburnt faces waited for the departure of the boat. The breeze rose again as the engine resumed its unappreciated labours, and, with our head toward Como, we pushed out into the lake. The company on board was such as might be expected. There was a German landscape-painter, with three heart's-friends beside him; there were some German ladies; there were the unfailing Americans and the unfailing Englishman; there were some French people; there were Italians from the meridional provinces, dark, thin, and enthusiastic, with fat, silent wives, and a rhythmical speech; there were Milanese with their families, out for a holiday,—round-

bodied men, with blunt square features, and hair and vowels clipped surprisingly short, there was a young girl whose face was of the exact type affected in rococo sculpture, and at whom one gazed without being able to decide whether she was a nymph descended from a villa gate, or a saint come from under a broken arch in a Renaissance church. At one of the little towns two young Englishmen in knickerbockers came on board, who were devoured by the eyes of their fellow-passengers, and between whom and our kindly architect there was instantly ratified the tacit treaty of non-intercourse which travelling Englishmen observe.

Nothing further interested us on the way to Como, except the gathering coolness of the evening air; the shadows creeping higher and higher on the hills; the songs of the girls winding yellow silk on the reels that hummed through the open windows of the factories on the shore; and the appearance of a flag that floated from a shallop before the landing of a stately villa. The Italians did not know this banner, and the Germans loudly debated its nationality. The Englishmen grinned, and the Americans blushed in silence. Of all my memories of that hot day on Lake Como, this is burnt the deepest; for the flag was

that insolent banner which in 1862 proclaimed us a broken people, and persuaded willing Europe of our ruin. It has gone down long ago from ship and fort and regiment, as well as from the shallop on the fair Italian lake. Still, I say, it made Como too hot for us that afternoon, and even breathless Milan was afterwards a pleasant contrast.

STOPPING AT VICENZA, VERONA, AND PARMA.

I.

IT was after sunset when we arrived in the birthplace of Palladio, which we found a fair city in the lap of caressing hills. There are pretty villas upon these slopes, and an abundance of shaded walks and drives about the houses, which were pointed out to us, by the boy who carried our light luggage from the railway station, as the property of rich citizens "but little less than lords" in quality. A lovely grove lay between the station and the city, and our guide not only took us voluntarily by the longest route through this, but, after reaching the streets, led us by labyrinthine ways to the hotel, in order, he afterwards confessed, to show us the city. He was a poet, though in that lowly walk of life, and he had done well. No other moment of our

stay would have served us so well for a first general impression of Vicenza as that twilight hour. In its uncertain glimmer we seemed to get quite back to the dawn of feudal civilisation, when Theodoric founded the great Basilica of the city; and as we stood before the famous Clock Tower, which rises light and straight as a mast eighty-two metres into the air from a base of seven metres, the wavering obscurity enhanced the effect by half concealing the tower's crest, and letting it soar endlessly upward in the fancy. The Basilica is greatly restored by Palladio, and the cold hand of that friend of virtuous poverty in architecture lies heavy upon his native city in many places. Yet there is still a great deal of Lombardic architecture in Vicenza; and we walked through one street of palaces in which Venetian Gothic prevailed, so that it seemed as if the Grand Canal had but just shrunk away from their bases. When we threw open our window at the hotel, we found that it overlooked one of the city gates, from which rose a Ghibelline tower with a great bulging cornice, full of the beauty and memory of times long before Palladio.

They were rather troublous times, and not to be recalled here in all their circum-

stance; but I think it due to Vicenza, which is now little spoken of, even in Italy, and is scarcely known in America, where her straw-braid is bought for that of Leghorn, to remind the reader that the city was for a long time a republic of very independent and warlike stomach. Before she arrived at that state, however, she had undergone a great variety of fortunes. The Gauls founded the city (as I learn from *The Chronicles of Vicenza*, by Battista Pagliarino, published at Vicenza in 1563) when Gideon was Judge in Israel, and were driven out by the Romans some centuries later. As a matter of course, Vicenza was sacked by Attila and conquered by Alboin; after which she was ruled by some lords of her own, until she was made an imperial city by Henry I. Then she had a government more or less republican in form till Frederick Barbarossa burnt her, and "wrapped her in ashes," and gave her to his vicar Eccelino da Romano, who "held her in cruel tyranny" from 1236 to 1259. The Paduans next ruled her forty years. and the Veronese seventy-seven, and the Milanese seventeen years; then she reposed in the arms of the Venetian Republic till these fell weak and helpless from all the Venetian possessions at the threat of Napo-

leon. Vicenza belonged again to Venice during the brief Republic of 1848, but the most memorable battle of that heroic but unhappy epoch gave her back to Austria. Now at last, and for the first time, she is Italian.

Vicenza is

> "Of kindred that have greatly expiated
> And greatly wept,"

and but that I so long fought against Eccelino da Romano, and the imperial interest in Italy, I could readily forgive her all her past errors. To us of the Lombard League, it was grievous that she should remain so doggishly faithful to her tyrant; though it is to be granted that perhaps fear had as much to do with her devotion as favour. The defence of 1848 was greatly to her honour, and she took an active part in that demonstration against the Austrians which endured from 1859 till 1866.

Of the demonstration we travellers saw an amusing phase at the opera, which we attended the evening of our arrival in Vicenza. *Nabucodonosor* was the piece to be given in the new open-air theatre outside the city walls, whither we walked under the starlight. It was a pretty structure of fresh white stucco, oval in form, with some grace-

ful architectural pretensions without, and within very charmingly galleried; while overhead it was roofed with a blue dome set with such starry mosaic as never covered temple or theatre since they used to leave their houses of play and worship open to the Attic skies. The old Hebrew story had, on this stage brought so near to Nature, effects seldom known to opera, and the scene evoked from far-off days the awful interest of the Bible histories,—the vague, unfigured oriental splendour—the desert—the captive people by the waters of the river of Babylon —the shadow and mystery of the prophecies. When the Hebrews, chained and toiling on the banks of the Euphrates, lifted their voices in lamentation, the sublime music so transfigured the commonplaceness of the words, that they meant all deep and unutterable affliction, and for a while swept away whatever was false and tawdry in the show, and thrilled our hearts with a rapture rarely felt. Yet, as but a moment before we had laughed to see Nebuchadnezzar's crown shot off his head by a squib visibly directed from the side scenes,—at the point when, according to the libretto, "the thunder roars, and a bolt descends upon the head of the king," so but a moment after some new ab-

surdity marred the illusion, and we began to look about the theatre at the audience. We then beheld that act of *dimostrazione* which I have mentioned. In one of the few boxes sat a young and very beautiful woman in a dress of white, with a fan which she kept in constant movement. It was red on one side, and green on the other, and gave, with the white dress, the forbidden Italian colours, while, looked at alone, it was innocent of offence. I do not think a soul in the theatre was ignorant of the demonstration. A satisfied consciousness was reflected from the faces of the Italians, and I saw two Austrian officers exchange looks of good-natured intelligence, after a glance at the fair patriot. I wonder what those poor people do, now they are free, and deprived of the sweet, perilous luxury of defying their tyrants by constant acts of subtle disdain? Life in Venetia must be very dull: no more explosion of pasteboard petards; no more treason in bouquets; no more stealthy inscriptions on the walls—it must be insufferably dull. *Ebbene, pazienza!* Perhaps Victor Emanuel may betray them yet.

A spirit of lawless effrontery, indeed, seemed to pervade the whole audience in the theatre that night at Vicenza, and to extend

to the ministers of the law themselves. There were large placards everywhere posted, notifying the people that it was forbidden to smoke in the theatre, and that smokers were liable to expulsion; but except for ourselves, and the fair patriot in the box, I think everybody there was smoking, and the policemen set the example of anarchy by smoking the longest and worst cigars of all. I am sure that the captive Hebrews all held lighted cigarettes behind their backs, and that Nebuchadnezzar, condemned to the grass of the field, conscientiously gave himself up to the Virginia weed behind the scenes.

Before I fell asleep that night the moon rose over the top of the feudal tower, in front of our hotel, and produced some very pretty effects with the battlements. Early in the morning a regiment of Croats marched through the gate below the tower, their band playing "The Young Recruit." These advantages of situation were not charged in our bill; but, even if they had been, I should still advise my reader to go, when in Vicenza, if he loves a pleasant landlord and a good dinner, to the Hotel de la Ville, which he will find almost at his sole disposition for however long time he may stay. His meals

will be served him in a vast dining-hall, as bare as a barn or a palace, but for the pleasant, absurd old paintings on the wall, representing, as I suppose, Cleopatra applying the Asp, Susannah and the Elders, the Roman Lucrezia, and other moral and appetising histories. I take it there is a quaint side-table or two lost midway of the wall, and that an old woodcut picture of the Most Noble City of Venice hangs over each. I know that there is a screen at one end of the apartment behind which the landlord invisibly assumes the head waiter; and I suspect that at the moment of sitting down at meat you hear two Englishmen talking—as they pass along the neighbouring corridor—of wine, in dissatisfied chest-tones. This hotel is of course built round a court, in which there is a stable and—exposed to the weather—a diligence, and two or three carriages and a driver, and an ostler chewing straw, and a pump and a grape-vine. Why the hotel, therefore, does not smell like a stable, from garret to cellar, I am utterly at a loss to know. I state the fact that it does not, and that every other hotel in Italy does smell of stable as if cattle had been immemorially pastured in its halls, and horses housed in its bedchambers,—or as

if its only guests were centaurs on their travels.

From the Museo Civico, whither we repaired first in the morning, and where there are some beautiful Montagnas, and an assortment of good and bad works by other masters, we went to the Campo Santo, which is worthy to be seen, if only because of the beautiful Laschi monument by Vela, one of the greatest modern sculptors. It is nothing more than a very simple tomb, at the door of which stands a figure in flowing drapery, with folded hands and uplifted eyes in an attitude exquisitely expressive of grief. The figure is said to be the portrait statue of the widow of him within the tomb, and the face is very beautiful. We asked if the widow was still young, and the custodian answered us in terms that ought to endear him to all women, if not to our whole mortal race: "Oh, quite young yet. She is perhaps fifty years old."

After the Campo Santo one ought to go to that theatre which Palladio built for the representation of classic tragedy, and which is perhaps the perfectest reproduction of the Greek theatre in the world. Alfieri is the only poet of modern times whose works have been judged worthy of this stage, and

no drama has been given on it since 1857, when the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles was played. We found it very silent and dusty, and were much sadder as we walked through its gaily frescoed, desolate anterooms than we had been in the Campo Santo. Here used to sit, at coffee and bassett, the merry people who owned the now empty seats of the theatre,—lord, and lady, and abbé,—who affected to be entertained by the scenes upon the stage. Upon my word, I should like to know what has become, in the other world, of those poor pleasurers of the past whose memory makes one so sad upon the scenes of their enjoyment here! I suppose they have something quite as unreal, yonder, to satisfy them as they had on earth, and that they still play at happiness in the old rococo way, though it is hard to conceive of any fiction outside of Italy so perfect and so entirely suited to their unreality as this classic theatre. It is a Greek theatre, for Greek tragedies; but it could never have been for popular amusement, and it was not open to the air, though it had a sky skilfully painted in the centre of the roof. The proscenium is a Greek façade, in three stories, such as never was seen in Greece: and the architecture of the three

streets running back from the proscenium, and forming the one unchangeable scene of all the dramas, is—like the statues in the niches and on the gallery enclosing the auditorium — Greek in the most fashionable Vicentine taste. It must have been but an operatic chorus that sang in the semicircular space just below the stage and in front of the audience. Admit and forget these small blemishes and aberrations, however, and what a marvellous thing Palladio's theatre is! The sky above the stage is a wonderful trick, and those three streets—one in the centre, and serving as entrance for the royal persons of the drama, one at the right for the nobles, and one at the left for the citizens — present unsurpassed effects of illusion. They are not painted, but modelled in stucco. In perspective they seem each half a mile long, but entering them you find that they run back from the proscenium only some fifteen feet, the fronts of the houses and the statues upon them decreasing in recession with a well-ordered abruptness. The semicircular gallery above the auditorium is of stone, and forty statues of marble crown its colonnade, or occupy niches between the columns.

II.

It was curious to pass, with the impression left by this costly and ingenious toy upon our minds, at once to the amphitheatre in Verona, which, next to the Coliseum, has, of all the works bequeathed us by the ancient Roman world, the greatest claim upon the wonder and imagination. Indeed, it makes even a stronger appeal to the fancy. We know who built the Coliseum, but in its unstoried origin the Veronese Arena has the mystery of the Pyramids. Was its founder Augustus, or Vitellius, or Antoninus, or Maximian; or the Republic of Verona? Nothing is certain but that it was conceived and reared by some mighty prince or people, and that it yet remains in such perfection that the great shows of two thousand years ago might take place in it to-day. It is so suggestive of the fierce and splendid spectacles of Roman times, that the ring left by a modern circus on the arena, and absurdly dwarfed by the vast space of the oval, had an impertinence which we hotly resented, looking down on it from the highest grade of the interior. It then lay fifty feet below us, in the middle of an ellipse five hundred feet in length and four hundred in breadth,

and capable of holding fifty thousand spectators. The seats that the multitudes pressed of old are perfect yet; scarce a stone has been removed from the interior; the ædile and the prefect might take their places again in the balustraded tribunes above the great entrance at either end of the arena, and scarcely see that they were changed. Nay, the victims and the gladiators might return to the cells below the seats of the people, and not know they had left them for a day; the wild beasts might leap into the arena from dens as secure and strong as when first built. The ruin within seems only to begin with the aqueduct, which was used to flood the arena for the naval shows, but which is now choked with the dust of ages. Without, however, is plain enough the doom which is written against all the work of human hands, and which, unknown of the builders, is among the memorable things placed in the corner-stone of every edifice. Of the outer wall that rose high over the highest seats of the amphitheatre, and encircled it with stately corridors, giving it vaster amplitude and grace, the earthquake of six centuries ago spared only a fragment that now threatens above one of the narrow Veronese streets. Blacksmiths, wagon-

makers, and workers in clangorous metals have made shops of the lower corridors of the old arena, and it is friends and neighbours with the modern life about it, as such things usually are in Italy. Fortunately for the stranger, the Piazza Brà flanks it on one hand, and across this it has a magnificent approach. It is not less happy in being little known to sentiment, and the traveller who visits it by moonlight has a full sense of grandeur and pathos, without any of the sheepishness attending homage to that battered old coquette, the Coliseum, which so many emotional people have sighed over, kissing and afterwards telling.

But he who would know the innocent charm of a ruin as yet almost wholly uncourted by travel, must go to the Roman theatre in Verona. It is not a favourite of the hand-books; and we were decided to see it chiefly by a visit to the Museum, where, besides an admirable gallery of paintings, there is a most interesting collection of antiques in bronze and marble found in excavating the theatre. The ancient edifice had been completely buried, and a quarter of the town was built over it, as Portici is built over Herculaneum, and on the very top stood a Jesuit convent. One

day, some children, playing in the garden of one of the shabby houses, suddenly vanished from sight. Their mother ran like one mad (I am telling the story in the words of the peasant who related it to me) to the spot where they had last been seen, and fell herself into an opening of the earth there. The outcry raised by these unfortunates brought a number of men to their aid, and in digging to get them out, an old marble stairway was discovered. This was about twenty-five years ago. A certain gentleman named Monga owned the land, and he immediately began to make excavations. He was a rich man, but considered rather whimsical (if my peasant represented the opinion of his neighbours), and as the excavation ate a great deal of money (*mangiava molti soldi*), his sons discontinued the work after his death, and nothing has been done for some time now. The peasant in charge was not a person of imaginative mind, though he said the theatre (supposed to have been built in the time of Augustus) was completed two thousand years before Christ. He had a purely conventional admiration of the work, which he expressed at regular intervals by stopping short in his course, waving both hands over the ruins, and crying in a sepul-

chral voice, "*Qual' opera!*" However, as he took us faithfully into every part of it, there is no reason to complain of him.

We crossed three or four streets, and entered at several different gates, in order to see the uncovered parts of the work, which could have been but a small proportion of the whole. The excavation has been carried down thirty and forty feet below the foundations of the modern houses, revealing the stone seats of the auditorium, the corridors beneath them, and the canals and other apparatus for naval shows, as in the great Amphitheatre. These works are even more stupendous than those of the Amphitheatre, for in many cases they are not constructed, but hewn out of the living rock, so that in this light the theatre is a gigantic sculpture. Below all are cut channels to collect and carry off the water of the springs in which the rock abounds. The depth of one of these channels near the Jesuit convent must be fifty feet below the present surface. Only in one place does the ancient edifice rise near the top of the ground, and there is uncovered the arched front of what was once a family-box at the theatre, with the owner's name graven upon the arch. Many poor little houses have of course been demolished to

carry on the excavations, and to the walls that joined them cling memorials of the simple life that once inhabited them. To one of the buildings hung a melancholy fireplace left blackened with smoke, and battered with use, but witnessing that it had once been the heart of a home. It was far more touching than anything in the elder ruin; and I think nothing could have so vividly expressed the difference which, in spite of all the resemblances noticeable in Italy, exists between the ancient and modern civilisation, as that family-box at the theatre and this simple fireside.

I do not now remember what fortunate chance it was that discovered to us the house of the Capulets, and I incline to believe that we gravitated toward it by operation of well-known natural principles which bring travellers acquainted with improbabilities wherever they go. We found it a very old and time-worn edifice, built round an ample court, and we knew it, as we had been told we should, by the cap carven in stone above the interior of the grand portal. The family, anciently one of the principal of Verona, has fallen from much of its former greatness. On the occasion of our visit, Juliet, very dowdily dressed, looked down from the top of a long,

dirty staircase which descended into the court, and seemed interested to see us; while her mother caressed with one hand a large yellow mastiff, and distracted it from its first impulse to fly upon us poor children of sentiment. There was a great deal of stable litter, and many empty carts standing about in the court; and if I might hazard the opinion formed upon these and other appearances, I should say that old Capulet has now gone to keeping a hotel, united with the retail liquor business, both in a small way.

Nothing could be more natural, after seeing the house of the Capulets, than a wish to see Juliet's Tomb, which is visited by all strangers, and is the common property of the hand-books. It formerly stood in a garden, where, up to the beginning of this century, it served, says my *Viaggio in Italia*, "for the basest uses,"—just as the sacred prison of Tasso was used for a charcoal bin. We found the sarcophagus under a shed in one corner of the garden of the Orfanotrofio delle Franceschine, and had to confess to each other that it looked like a horse-trough roughly hewn out of stone. The garden, said the boy in charge of the moving monument, had been the burial-place

of the Capulets, and this tomb being found in the middle of the garden, was easily recognised as that of Juliet. Its genuineness, as well as its employment in the ruse of the lovers, was proven beyond cavil by a slight hollow cut for the head to rest in, and a hole at the foot "to breathe through," as the boy said. Does not the fact that this relic has to be protected from the depredations of travellers, who could otherwise carry it away piecemeal, speak eloquently of a large amount of vulgar and rapacious innocence drifting about the world?

It is well to see even such idle and foolish curiosities, however, in a city like Verona, for the mere going to and fro in search of them through her streets is full of instruction and delight. To my mind, no city has a fairer place than she that sits beside the eager Adige, and breathes the keen air of mountains white with snows in winter, green and purple with vineyards in summer, and for ever rich with marble. Around Verona stretch those gardened plains of Lombardy, on which Nature, who dotes on Italy, and seems but a step-mother to all transalpine lands, has lavished every gift of beauty and fertility. Within the city's walls, what store of art and history! Her market-places

have been the scenes of a thousand tragic or ridiculous dramas; her quaint and narrow streets are ballads and legends full of love-making and murder; the empty, grass-grown piazzas before her churches are tales that are told of municipal and ecclesiastical splendour. Her nobles sleep in marble tombs so beautiful that the dust in them ought to be envied by living men in Verona; her lords lie in perpetual state in the heart of the city, in magnificent sepulchres of such grace and opulence, that, unless a language be invented full of lance-headed characters, and Gothic vagaries of arch and finial, flower and fruit, bird and beast, they can never be described. Sacred be their rest from pen of mine, Verona! Nay, while I would fain bring the whole city before my reader's fancy, I am loath and afraid to touch anything in it with my poor art: either the tawny river, spanned with many beautiful bridges, and murmurous with mills afloat and turned by the rapid current; or the thoroughfares with their passengers and bright shops and caffès; or the grim old feudal towers; or the age-embrowned palaces, eloquent in their haughty strength of the times when they were family fortresses; or the churches with the red pillars of their

porticoes resting upon the backs of eagle-headed lions; or even the white-coated garrison (now there no more), with its heavy-footed rank and file, its handsome and resplendent officers, its bristling fortifications, its horses and artillery, crowding the piazzas of churches turned into barracks. All these things haunt my memory, but I could only at best thinly sketch them in meagre black and white. Verona is an almost purely Gothic city in her architecture, and her churches are more worthy to be seen than any others in North Italy, outside of Venice. San Zenone, with the quaint bronzes on its doors representing in the rudeness of the first period of art the incidents of the Old Testament and the miracles of the saints—with the allegorical sculptures surrounding the interior and exterior of the portico, and illustrating, among other things, the creation of Eve with absolute literalness—with its beautiful and solemn crypt in which the dust of the titular saint lies entombed—with its minute windows, and its vast columns sustaining the roof upon capitals of every bizarre and fantastic device—is doubtless most abundant in that Gothic spirit, now grotesque and now earnest, which somewhere appears in all the churches of

Verona; which has carven upon the façade of the Duomo the statues of Orlando and Olliviero, heroes of romance, and near them has placed the scandalous figure of a pig in a monk's robe and cowl, with a breviary in his paw; which has reared the exquisite monument of Guglielmo da Castelbarco before the church of St. Anastasia, and has produced the tombs of the Scaligeri before the chapel of Santa Maria Antica.

I have already pledged myself not to attempt any description of these tombs, and shall not fall now. But I bought in the English tongue, as written at Verona, some "Notices," kept for sale by the sacristan, "of the Ancient Churg of Our Lady, and of the Tombs of the most illustrious Family Della-Scala," and from these I think it no dereliction to quote *verbatim*. First is the tomb of Can Francesco, who was "surnamed the Great by reason of his valour." "With him the Great Alighieri and other exiles took refuge. We see his figure extended upon a bed, and above his statue on horseback with the vizor down, and his crest falling behind his shoulders, his horse covered with mail. The columns and capitals are wonderful." "Within the Cemetery to the right leaning against the walls of the church is the tomb

of John Scaliger." "In the side of this tomb near the wall of Sacristy, you see the urn that encloses the ashes of Martin I.," "who was traitorously killed on the 17th of October 1277 by Scaramello of the Scaramelli, who wished to revenge the honour of a young lady of his family." "The Mausoleum that is in the side facing the Place encloses the Martin II.'s ashes. . . . This building is sumptuous and wonderful because it stands on four columns, each of which has an architrave of nine feet. On the beams stands a very large square of marble that forms the floor, on which stands the urn of the Defunct. Four other columns support the vault that covers the urn; and the rest is adorned by facts of Old Testament. Upon the Summit is the equestrian statue as large as life." Of "Can Signorius," whose tomb is the most splendid of all, the "Notices" say: "He spent two thousand florins of gold, in order to prepare his own sepulchre while he was yet alive, and to surpass the magnificence of his predecessors. The monument is as magnificent as the contracted space allows. Six columns support the floor of marble on which it stands covered with figures. Six other columns support the top, on that is the Scaliger's statues. . . . The monument

is surrounded by an enclosure of red marble, with six pillars, on which are square capitols with armed Saints. The rails of iron with the Arms of the Scala, are worked with a beauty wonderful for that age," or, I may add, for any age. These "rails" are an exquisite network of iron wrought by hand, with an art emulous of that of Nicolò Caparra at Florence. The chief device employed is a ladder (*scala*) constantly repeated in the centres of quatre-foils; and the whole fabric is still so flexible and perfect, after the lapse of centuries, that the net may be shaken throughout by a touch. Four other tombs of the Scaligeri are here, among which the "Notices" particularly mention that of Alboin della Scala: "He was one of the Ghibelline party, as the arms on his urn schew, that is a staircase risen by an eagle —wherefore Dante said, *In sulla Scala porta il santo Uccello.*"

I should have been glad to meet the author of these delightful histories, but in his absence we fared well enough with the sacristan. When, a few hours before we left Verona, we came for a last look at the beautiful sepulchres, he recognised us, and seeing a sketch-book in the party, he invited us within the enclosure again, and then ran

and fetched chairs for us to sit upon—nay, even placed chairs for us to rest our feet on. Winning and exuberant courtesy of the Italian race! If I had never acknowledged it before, I must do homage to it now, remembering the sweetness of the sacristans and custodians of Verona. They were all men of the most sympathetic natures. He at San Zenone seemed never to have met with real friends till we expressed pleasure in the magnificent Mantegna, which is the pride of his church. "What colouring!" he cried, and then triumphantly took us into the crypt: "What a magnificent crypt! What works they executed in those days, there!" At San Giorgio Maggiore, where there are a Tintoretto and a Veronese, and four horrible swindling big pictures by Romanino, I discovered to my great dismay that I had in my pocket but five soldi, which I offered with much abasement and many apologies to the sacristan; but he received them as if they had been so many napoleons, prayed me not to speak of embarrassment, and declared that his labours in our behalf had been nothing but pleasure. At Santa Maria in Organo, where are the wonderful *intagli* of Fra Giovanni da Verona, the sacristan fully shared our sorrow that the best pictures

could not be unveiled as it was Holy Week. He was also moved with us at the gradual decay of the *intagli*, and led us to believe that, to a man of so much sensibility, the general ruinous state of the church was an inexpressible affliction; and we rejoiced for his sake that it should possess at least one piece of art in perfect repair. This was a modern work, that day exposed for the first time, and it represented in a group of wooden figures the death of St. Joseph. The Virgin and Christ supported the dying saint on either hand; and as the whole was vividly coloured, and rays of glory in pink and yellow gauze descended upon Joseph's head, nothing could have been more impressive.

III.

Parma is laid out with a regularity which may be called characteristic of the great ducal cities of Italy, and which it fully shares with Mantua, Ferrara, and Bologna. The signorial cities, Verona, Vicenza, Padua, and Treviso, are far more picturesque, and Parma excels only in the number and beauty of her fountains. It is a city of gloomy aspect, says Valery, who possibly entered it in a pensive frame of mind, for its sadness did not impress us. We had just come from

Modena, where the badness of our hotel enveloped the city in an atmosphere of profound melancholy. In fact, it will not do to trust to travellers in anything. I, for example, have just now spoken of the many beautiful fountains in Parma, because I think it right to uphold the statement of M. Richard's hand-book; but I only remember seeing one fountain, passably handsome, there. My Lord Corke, who was at Parma in 1754, says nothing of fountains, and Richard Lasells, Gent., who was there a century earlier, merely speaks of the fountains in the Duke's gardens, which, together with his Grace's "wild beasts" and "exquisite coaches," and "admirable Theatre to exhibit Operas in," "the Domo, whose Cupola was painted by the rare hand of Correggio," and the Church of the Capuchins, where Alexander Farnese is buried, were "the Chief things to be seen in Parma" at that day.

The wild beasts have long ago run away with the exquisite coaches, but the other wonders named by Master Lasells are still extant in Parma, together with some things he does not name. Our minds, in going thither, were mainly bent upon Correggio and his works, and while our dinner was

cooking at the admirable Albergo della Posta, we went off to feast upon the perennial Hash of Frogs in the dome of the Cathedral. This is one of the finest Gothic churches in Italy, and vividly recalls Verona, while it has a quite unique and most beautiful feature in the three light-columned galleries, that traverse the façade one above another. Close at hand stands the ancient Baptistery, hardly less peculiar and beautiful; but, after all, it is the work of the great painter which gives the temple its chief right to wonder and reverence. We found the fresco, of course, much wasted, and at first glance, before the innumerable arms and legs had time to order and attribute themselves to their respective bodies, we felt the justice of the undying spite which called this divinest of frescoes a *guazzetto di rane*. But in another moment it appeared to us the most sublime conception of the Assumption ever painted, and we did not find Caracci's praise too warm where he says: "And I still remain stupefied with the sight of so grand a work—everything so well conceived —so well seen from below—with so much severity, yet with so much judgment and so much grace; with a colouring which is of very flesh." The height of the fresco

above the floor of the church is so vast that it might well appear like a heavenly scene to the reeling sense of the spectator. Brain, nerve, and muscle were strained to utter exhaustion in a very few minutes, and we came away with our admiration only half-satisfied, and resolved to ascend the cupola next day, and see the fresco on something like equal terms. In one sort we did thus approach it; and as we looked at the gracious floating figures of the heavenly company through the apertures of the dome, they did seem to adopt us and make us part of the painting. But the tremendous depth, over which they drifted so lightly, it dizzied us to look into; and I am not certain that I should counsel travellers to repeat our experience. Where still perfect, the fresco can only gain from close inspection,—it is painted with such exquisite and jealous perfection,—yet the whole effect is now better from below, for the decay is less apparent; and besides, life is short, and the stairway by which one ascends to the dome is in every way too exigent. It is with the most astounding sense of contrast that you pass from the "Assumption" to the contemplation of that other famous roof frescoed by Correggio, in the Monastero di San Paolo. You

might almost touch the ceiling with your hand, it hovers so low with its counterfeit of vine-clambered trellis-work, and its pretty boys looking roguishly through the embowering leaves. It is altogether the loveliest room in the world; and if the Diana in her car on the chimney is truly a portrait of the abbess for whom the chamber was decorated, she was altogether worthy of it, and one is glad to think of her enjoying life in the fashion amiably permitted to nuns in the fifteenth century. What curious scenes the gaiety of this little chamber conjures up, and what a vivid comment it is upon the age and people that produced it! This is one of the things that makes a single hour of travel worth whole years of historic study, and which casts its light upon all future reading. Here, no doubt, the sweet little abbess, with the noblest and prettiest of her nuns about her, received the polite world, and made a cheerful thing of devotion, while all over transalpine Europe the sour-hearted Reformers were destroying pleasant monasteries like this. The light-hearted lady-nuns and their gentlemen friends looked on heresy as a deadly sin, and they had little reason to regard it with favour. It certainly made life harder for

them in time, for it made reform within the Church as well as without, so that at last the lovely Chamber of St. Paul was closed against the public for more than two centuries.

All Parma is full of Correggio, as Venice is of Titian and Tintoretto, as Naples of Spagnoletto, as Mantua of Giulio Romano, as Vicenza of Palladio, as Bassano of Da Ponte, as Bologna of Guido Reni. I have elsewhere noticed how ineffaceably and exclusively the manner of the masters seems to have stamped itself upon the art of the cities where they severally wrought,—how at Parma Correggio yet lives in all the sketchy mouths of all the pictures painted there since his time. One might always believe, hearing the Parmesans talk, that his manner had infected their dialect, and that they fashioned their lazy, incomplete utterance with the careless lips of his nymphs and angels. They almost entirely suppress the last syllable of every word, and not with a quick precision, as people do in Venice or Milan, but with an ineffable languor, as if language were not worth the effort of enunciation; while they rise and lapse several times in each sentence, and sink so sweetly and sadly away upon the closing

vocable that the listener can scarcely repress his tears. In this melancholy rhythm, one of the citizens recounted to me the whole story of the assassination of the last Duke of Parma in 1850; and left me as softly moved as if I had been listening to a tale of hapless love. Yet it was an ugly story, and after the enchantment of the recital passed away, I perceived that when the Duke was killed justice was done on one of the maddest and wickedest tyrants that ever harassed an unhappy city.

The Parmesans remember Maria Louisa, Napoleon's wife, with pleasant enough feelings, and she seems to have been good to them after the manner of sovereigns, enriching their city with art, and beautifying it in many ways, besides doing works of private charity and beneficence. Her daughter by a second marriage, the Countess Sanvitali, still lives in Parma; and in one of the halls of the Academy of Fine Arts the Duchess herself survives in the marble of Canova. It was she who caused the two great pictures of Correggio, the "St. Jerome" and the "Madonna della Scodella," to be placed alone in separate apartments hung with silk, in which the painter's initial "A" is endlessly interwoven. "The Night," to which the "St. Jerome" is

"The Day," is in the gallery at Dresden, but Parma could have kept nothing more representative of her great painter's power than this "Day." It is "the bridal of the earth and sky," and all sweetness, brightness, and tender shadow are in it. Many other excellent works of Correggio, Caracci, Parmegianino, and masters of different schools are in this gallery, but it is the good fortune of travellers, who have to see so much, that the memory of the very best alone distinctly remains. Nay, in the presence of prime beauty nothing else exists, and we found that the Church of the Steccata, where Parmegianino's sublime "Moses breaking the Tables of the Law" is visible in the midst of a multitude of other figures on the vault, really contained nothing at last but that august and awful presence.

Undoubtedly the best gallery of classical antiquities in North Italy is that of Parma, which has derived all its precious relics from the little city of Valleja alone. It is a fine foretaste of Pompeii and the wonders of the Museo Borbonico at Naples, with its antique frescoes, and marble, and bronzes. I think nothing better has come out of Herculaneum than the comic statuette of "Hercules Drunk." He is in bronze, and

the drunkest man who has descended to us from the elder world; he reels backward, and leers knowingly upon you, while one hand hangs stiffly at his side, and the other faintly clasps a wine-cup—a burly, worthless, disgraceful demigod.

The great Farnese Theatre was, as we have seen, admired by Lasells; but Lord Corke found it a "useless structure," though immense. "The same spirit that raised the Colossus at Rhodes," he says, "raised the theatre at Parma; that insatiable spirit and lust of Fame which would brave the Almighty by fixing eternity to the name of a perishable being." If it was indeed this spirit, I am bound to say that it did not build so wisely at Parma as at Rhodes. The play-house that Ranuzio I. constructed in 1628, to do honour to Cosmo II. de' Medici (pausing at Parma on his way to visit the tomb of San Carlo Borromeo), and that for a century afterward was the scene of the most brilliant spectacles in the world, is now one of the dismallest and dustiest of ruins. This *Theatrum orbis miraculum* was built and ornamented with the most perishable materials, and even its size has shrunken as the imaginations of men have contracted under the strong light of later days. When it was

first opened, it was believed to hold fourteen thousand spectators; at a later *fête* it held only ten thousand; the last published description fixes its capacity at five thousand; and it is certain that for many and many a year it has held only the stray tourists who have looked in upon its desolation. The gay paintings hang in shreds and tatters from the roof; dust is thick upon the seats and in the boxes, and on the leads that line the space once flooded for naval games. The poor plaster statues stand naked and forlorn amid the ruin of which they are part; and the great stage, from which the curtain has rotted away, yawns dark and empty before the empty auditorium.

DUCAL MANTUA.

IN that desperate depth of Hell where Dante beholds the Diviners doomed to pace with backward-twisted faces, and turn for ever on the past the rainy eyes once bent too daringly on the future, the sweet guide of the Tuscan poet points out among the damned the daughter of a Theban king, and discourses to his charge :—

Manto was she : through many lands she went
  Seeking, and paused where I was born, at last.
Therefore I choose thou be on me intent
  A little. When from life her father passed,
And they of Bacchus' city became slaves,
  Long time about the world the daughter cast.
Up in fair Italy is a lake that laves
  The feet of Alps that lock in Germany :
  Benaco called. . . . . .
And Peschiera in strong harness sits
  To front the Brescians and the Bergamasques,
Where one down-curving shore the other meets.
  There all the gathered waters outward flow
That may not in Benaco's bosom rest,
  And down through pastures green a river go,
. . . . . .

As far as to Governo, where, its quest
  Ended at last, it falls into the Po.
But far it has not sought before a plain
  It finds and floods, out-creeping wide and slow
To be the steaming summer's offence and bane.
  Here passing by, the fierce, unfriendly maid
Saw land in the middle of the sullen main,
  Wild and unpeopled, and here, unafraid
Of human neighbourhood, she made her lair,
  Rested, and with her menials wrought her trade,
And lived, and left her empty body there.
  Then the sparse people that were scattered near
Gathered upon that island, everywhere
  Compassed about with swamps and kept from fear.
  They built their city above the witch's grave,
And for her sake that first made dwelling there
  The name of Mantua to their city gave.

To this account of the first settlement of Mantua Virgil adds a warning to his charge to distrust all other histories of the city's foundation; and Dante is so thoroughly persuaded of its truth, that he declares all other histories shall be to him as so many lifeless embers. Nevertheless, divers chroniclers of Mantua reject the tradition here given as fabulous; and the carefullest and most ruthless of these traces the city's origin, not to the unfriendly maid, but to the Etruscan King Ocno, fixing the precise date of its foundation at thirty years before the Trojan war, one thousand five hundred and thirty-nine years after the creation of

the world, three hundred years before Rome, and nine hundred and fifteen years after the Flood, while Abimelech was judge in Israel. "And whoever," says the compiler of the *Flower of the Mantuan Chroniclers* (it is a very dry and musty flower indeed), citing doughty authorities for all his facts and figures,—"whoever wishes to understand this more curiously, let him read the said authors, and he will be satisfied."

But I am as little disposed to unsettle the reader's faith in the Virgilian tradition, as to part with my own; and I therefore uncandidly hold back the names of the authorities cited. This tradition was in fact the only thing concerning Mantuan history present to my thoughts as I rode toward the city, one afternoon of a pleasant Lombard spring; and when I came in sight of the ancient hold of sorcery, with the languid waters of its lagoons lying sick at its feet, I recognised at least the topographical truth of Virgil's description. But old and mighty walls now surround the spot which Manto found sterile and lonely in the heart of the swamp formed by the Mincio, no longer Benaco; and the dust of the witch is multitudinously hidden under the edifices of a city whose mighty domes, towers, and

spires make its approach one of the stateliest in the world. It is a prospect on which you may dwell long as you draw toward the city, for the road from the railway station winds through some two miles of flat meadow-land before it reaches the gate of the stronghold which the Italians call the first hope of the winner of the land and the last hope of the loser of Italy. Indeed, there is no haste in any of the means of access to Mantua. It lies scarce forty miles south of Verona, and you are three hours in journeying this distance in the placid railway train, — a distance which Romeo, returning to Verona from his exile in Mantua, no doubt travelled in less time. There is abundant leisure to study the scenery on the way; but it scarcely repays the perusal, for it lacks the beauty of the usual Lombard landscape. The soil is red, stony, and sterile; the orchard trees are scant and slender, and not wedded with the caressing vines which elsewhere in North Italy garland happier trees and stretch gracefully from trunk to trunk. Especially the landscape looks sad and shabby about the little village of Villafranca, where, in 1864, the dejected prospect seemed incapable of a smile even in spring; as if it had lost all hope and

cheerfulness since the peace was made which confirmed Venetia to the alien. It said as plainly as real estate could express the national sentiment, "*Come si fa? Ci vuol pazienza!*" and crept sullenly out of sight, as our pensive train resumed its meditative progress. No doubt this poor landscape *was* imbued, in its dull, earthly way, with a feeling that the coming of Garibaldi would irrigate and fertilise it into a paradise; as at Venice the gondoliers believed that his army would bring in its train cheap wine and hordes of rich and helpless Englishmen bent on perpetual tours of the Grand Canal without understanding as to price.

But within and without Mantua was a strong argument against possibility of change in the political condition of this part of Italy. Compassed about by the corruption of the swamps and the sluggish breadth of the river, the city is no less mighty in her artificial defences than in this natural strength of her position; and the Croats of her garrison were as frequent in her sad, handsome streets as the priests in Rome. Three lakes secure her from approach upon the east, north, and south; on the west is a vast intrenched camp, which can be flooded at pleasure from one of the lakes; while the

water runs three fathoms deep at the feet of the solid brick walls all round the city. There are five gates giving access by drawbridges from the town to the fortressed posts on every side, and commanding with their guns the roads that lead to them. The outlying forts, with the citadel, are four in number, and are each capable of holding from two to three thousand men. The intrenched camp, for cavalry and artillery, and the barracks of the city itself, can receive a garrison of from thirty to forty thousand men; and the measureless depths of the air are full of the fever that fights in defence of Mantua, and serves with equal zeal whoever is master of the place, let him be French, Italian, or Austrian, so only that he have an unacclimated enemy before him.

I confess that little of this formidable military knowledge burdened me on the occasion of my visit to Mantua, and I have already confessed that I was but very imperfectly informed of the history of the city. But indeed, if the reader dealt candidly with himself, how much could *he* profess to know of Mantuan history? The ladies all have some erudite associations with the place as giving the term of *mantua-making* to the art of dress, and most persons

have heard that Mantua's law was once death to any he that uttered mortal drugs there, and that the place was still a few years since an Austrian fortress on the Mincio. Of Giulio Romano, and his works in Mantua, a good many have heard; and there is something known to the reader of the punctuated edition of Browning about Sordello. But of the Gonzagas of Mantua, and their duchy, what do you know, gentle reader?

For myself, when in Mantua, I tried to make a virtue of my want of information, and fancied that a sort of general ignorance was more favourable to my enjoyment of what I saw there than thorough acquaintance with the city's history would have been. It certainly enabled me to accept all the poetic fiction of the custodians, and to embroider with their pleasing improbabilities the business-like succinctness of the guide-books; to make out of the twilight which involved all impressions a misty and heroic picture of the Mantuan past, wherein her great men appeared with a stately and gigantic uncertainty of outline, and mixed with dim scenes of battle, intrigue, and riot, and were gone before Fact could lay her finger on any shape, and swear that it was

called so, and did so and so. But even if there had been neither pleasure nor profit in this ignorance, the means of dispelling it are so scant in modern literature that it might well have been excused in a far more earnest traveller. The difficulty, indeed, which I afterwards experienced in trying to learn something of Mantua, is my best excuse for writing of its history here.

I fancy that the few recent books on the subject are not in the hands of most readers, and I have a comforting belief that scarcely a reader of mine has been a reader of the *Grande Illustrazione del Lombardo-Veneto*.[1] Yet I suppose that he forms some notion of this work from its title, and figures to himself a physical bulk of six volumes,—large, abounding in ill-printed woodcuts, and having the appalling features which repel our race from pictorial history-books generally.

The *Grande Illustrazione del Lombardo-Veneto* includes notice of all those dear and famous cities of North Italy which we

[1] Mantova e Sua Provincia, per l' Avvocato Bartolomeo Arrighi: *Grande Illustrazione del Lombardo-Veneto, ossia Storia delle Città, dei Borghi, Communi, Castelli, etc., fino ai Tempi moderni. Per Cura di* Cesare Cantu, *e d' altri Literati.* Milano, 1859.

know,—of Verona, Vicenza, Padua, Venice, Mantua, Modena, Brescia, Bergamo, and the rest; but here we have only to do with the part which concerns Mantua. This is written by the advocate Bartolomeo Arrighi, whose ingenious avoidance of all that might make his theme attractive could not be sufficiently celebrated here, and may therefore be left to the reader's fancy. There is little in his paper to leaven statistical heaviness; and in recounting one of the most picturesque histories, he contrives to give merely a list of the events and a diagram of the scenes. Whatever illustrated character in princes or people he carefully excludes, and the raciness of anecdote and the flavour of manner and epoch distil not into his compilation from the elder historiographers. I have therefore to go back, in my present purpose, to the authors whose substance he has desiccated; and with their help, and that of one or two antiquated authors of this century, I shall try to rehabilitate the ducal state of Mantua,

"Which was an image of the mighty world,"

and present some shadow of its microcosmal life. The story has the completeness of a tragedy; but it runs over many centuries, and it ends like a farce, though it ends

with a death. One feels, indeed, almost as great satisfaction in the catastrophe as the Mantuans themselves, who terminated their national existence and parted from their last Duke with something like exultation.

As I recall my own impressions of the city, I doubt if any good or bad fortune could rouse her to such positive emotion now. She seemed sunken, that dull April evening of our visit, into an abiding lethargy; as if perfect repose, and oblivion from the many-troubled past,—from the renown of all former famine, fire, intrigue, slaughter, and sack,—were to be preferred by the ghost of a once populous and haughty capital to the most splendid memories of national life. Certainly, the phantom of bygone Mantuan greatness did not haunt the idle tourists who strolled through her wide streets, enjoying their quiet beauty and regularity, and finding them, despite their empty, melancholy air, full of something that reminded of home. Coming from a land where there is a vast deal of length, breadth, and rectitude in streets, as well as human nature, they could not, of course, feel that wonder in the Mantuan avenues which inspired a Venetian ambassador, two centuries since, to write the Serenest Senate in praise of their marvellous

extent and straightness; but they were still conscious of a certain expansive difference from Gothic Verona and narrow Venice. The windows of the ground-floors were grated to the prison-like effect common throughout Italy; but people evidently lived upon the ground-floors, and at many of the iron-barred windows fair young prisoners sat and looked out upon the streets, or laughed and chatted together. About the open doorways, moreover, people lounged gossiping; and the interiors of the entry-halls, as they appeared to the passing glance, were clean, and had not that forbidding, inhospitable air characteristic of most house entrances in North Italy. But sculptured Venice and Verona had unfitted the travellers for pleasure in the stucco of Mantua; and they had an immense scorn for the large and beautiful palaces of which the before-quoted ambassador speaks, because they found them faced with cunningly-moulded plaster instead of carven stone. Nevertheless, they could not help a kind of half-tender respect for the old town. It shares the domestic character of its scenes with the other ducal cities, Modena, Parma, and Ferrara; and this character is, perhaps, proper to all long and intensely municipalised com-

munities. But Mantua has a ghostly calm wholly its own; and this was not in the least broken that evening by chatters at thresholds, and pretty laughers at grated windows. It was very, very quiet. Perhaps half a score of carriages rumbled by us in our long walk, and we met some scattered promenaders. But for the most part the streets were quite empty; and even in the chief piazza, where there was still some belated show of buying and selling, and about the doors of the caffès, where there was a good deal of languid loafing, there was no indecency of noise or bustle. There were visibly few people in the place, and it was in decay; but it was not squalid in its lapse. The streets were scrupulously neat and clean, and the stuccoed houses were all painted of that pale saffron hue which gives such unquestionable respectability to New England towns. Before we returned to our lodgings, Mantua had turned into twilight; and we walked homeward through a placid and dignified gloom, nowhere broken by the flare of gas, and only remotely affected, here and there, by the light of lamps of oil, faintly twinkling in a disheartened Mantuan fashion.

If you turn this pensive light upon the yellow pages of those old chronicles of which

I spoke, it reveals pictures fit to raise both pity and wonder for the past of this city,—pictures full of the glory of struggles for freedom, of the splendour of wise princes, of the comfort of a prosperous and contented people, of the grateful fruits of protected arts and civilisation; but likewise stained with images of unspeakable filth and wickedness, baseness and cruelty, incredible shame, suffering, and sin.

Long before the birth of Christ, the Gauls drive out the Etruscans from Mantua, and aggrandise and beautify the city, to be in their turn expelled by the Romans, under whom Mantua again waxes strong and fair. In this time, the wife of a farmer not far from the city dreams a marvellous dream of bringing forth a laurel-bough, and in due time bears into the world the chiefest of all Mantuans, with a smile upon his face. This is a poet, and they call his name Virgil. He goes from his native city to Rome, when ripe for glory, and has there the good fortune to win back his father's farm, which the greedy veterans of Augustus, then settled in the Cremonese, had annexed to the spoils bestowed upon them by the Emperor. Later in this Roman time, and only three years after the death of Him whom the poet all

but prophesied, another grand event marks an epoch in Mantuan history. According to the pious legend, the soldier Longinus, who pierced the side of Christ as He hung upon the cross, has been converted by a miracle; wiping away that costly Blood from his spear-head, and then drawing his hand across his eyes, he is suddenly healed of his near-sightedness, and stricken with the full wonder of conviction. He gathers anxiously the precious drops of Blood from his weapon into the phial from which the vinegar mixed with gall was poured, and, forsaking his life of soldier, he wanders with his new-won faith and his priceless treasure to Mantua, where it is destined to work famous miracles, and to be the most valued possession of the city to all after-time. The saint himself, preaching the Gospel of Christ, suffers martyrdom under Tiberius; his tongue is cut out, and his body is burnt; and his ashes are buried at Mantua, forgotten, and found again in after ages with due signs and miraculous portents. The Romans give a civil tranquillity to Mantua; but it is not till three centuries after Christ that the persecutions of the Christians cease. Then the temples of the gods are thrown down, and churches are built; and the city goes forward to share

the destinies of the Christianised empire, and be spoiled by the barbarians. In 407 the Goths take it, and the Vandals in their turn sack and waste it, and scatter its people, who return again after the storm, and rebuild their city. Attila, marching to destroy it, is met at Governo (as you see in Raphael's fresco in the Vatican) by Pope Leo I., who conjures him to spare the city, and threatens him with Divine vengeance if he refuse; above the pontiff's head two wrathful angels, bearing drawn swords, menace the Hun with death if he advance; and, thus miraculously admonished, he turns aside from Mantua and spares it. The citizens successfully resist an attack of Alboin; but the Longobards afterwards, unrestrained by the visions of Attila, beat the Mantuans and take the city. From the Lombards the Greeks, sent thither by the Exarch of Ravenna, captured Mantua about the end of the sixth century; and then, the Lombards turning immediately to besiege it again, the Greeks defend their prize long and valiantly, but in the end are overpowered. They are allowed to retire with their men and arms to Ravenna, and the Lombards dismantle the city.

Concerning our poor Mantua under Lombard rule there is but little known, except

that she went to war with the Cremonese; and it may be fairly supposed that she was, like her neighbours, completely involved in foreign and domestic discords of every kind. That war with the Cremonese was about the possession of the river Ollio; and the Mantuans came off victors in it, slaying immense numbers of the enemy, and taking some thousands of them prisoners, whom their countrymen ransomed on condition of building one of the gates of Mantua with materials from the Cremonese territory, and mortar mixed with water from the disputed Ollio. The reader easily conceives how bitter a pill this must have been for the high-toned Cremonese gentlemen of that day.

When Charlemagne made himself master of Italy, the Mantuan lands and Mantuan men were divided up among the brave soldiers who had helped to enslave the country. These warriors of Charlemagne became counts; and the *contadini*, or inhabitants of each *contado* (county), became absolutely dependent on their will and pleasure. It is recorded (to the confusion of those who think primitive barbarism is virtue) that the corruption of those rude and brutal old times was great, that all classes were sunk in vice, and that the clergy were especially venal

and abominable. After the death of Charlemagne, in the ninth century, wars broke out all over Italy between the factions supporting different aspirants to his power; and we may be sure that Mantua had some share in the common quarrel. As I have found no explicit record of this period, I distribute to the city, as her portion of the calamities, at least two sieges, one capture and sack, and a decimation by famine and pestilence. We certainly read that, fifty years later, the Emperor Rudolph attacked it with his Hungarians, took it, pillaged it, and put great part of its people to the sword. During the siege, some pious Mantuans had buried (to save them from the religious foe) the Blood of Christ, and part of the sponge which had held the gall and vinegar, together with the body of St. Longinus. Most unluckily, however, these excellent men were put to the sword, and all knowledge of the place of sepulture perished with them.

At the end of these wars Mantua received a lord, by appointment of the Emperor, and the first lord's son married the daughter of the Duke of Lorraine, from which union was born the great Countess Matilda. Boniface was the happy bridegroom's name, and the wedding had a wild splendour and profuse

barbaric jollity about it, which it is pleasant enough to read of after so much cutting and slashing. The viands were passed round on horseback to the guests, and the horses were shod with silver shoes loosely nailed on, that they might drop off and be scrambled for by the people. Oxen were roasted whole, as at a Kentucky barbecue; and wine was drawn from wells with buckets hung on silver chains. It was the first great display of that magnificence of which after princes of Mantua were so fond; and the wretched hinds out of whose sweat it came no doubt thought it very fine.

Of course Lord Boniface had his wars. There was a plot to depose him discovered in Mantua, and the plotters fled to Verona. Boniface demanded them; but the Veronese answered stoutly that theirs was a free city, and no man should be taken from it against his will. Boniface marched to attack them; and the Veronese were such fools as to call the Duke of Austria to their aid, promising submission to his government in return for his help. It was then that Austria first put her finger into the Italian *pasticcio*, where she kept it so many centuries. But the Austrian governor whom the Duke set over the Veronese made himself intolerable,—the

Austrian governor always does,—and they drove him out of the city. On this the Duke turns about, unites with Boniface, takes Verona, and sacks it.

An altogether pleasanter incident of Boniface's domination was the miraculous discovery of the sacred relics, buried and lost during the sack of Mantua by the Hungarians. The place of sepulture was revealed thrice to a blind pauper in a dream. People dug where he bade them, and found the relics. Immediately on its exhumation the Blood wrought innumerable miracles; and the fame of it grew so great, that the Pope came to see it, attended by such concourse of the people that they were obliged to sleep in the streets. It was an age that threw the mantle of exterior devotion and laborious penances and pilgrimages over the most hideous crimes and unnatural sins. But perhaps the poor believers who slept in the streets of Mantua on that occasion were none the worse for their faith when the Pope pronounced the Blood genuine, and blessed it. I am sure that for some days of enthusiasm they abstained from the violence of war, and paused a little in that career of vice and wickedness of which one reads in Italian history, with the full conviction that

Sodom and Gomorrah also were facts, and not merely allegory. I have no doubt that the blind beggar believed that Heaven had revealed to him the place where the Blood was buried, that the Pope believed in the verity of the relic, and that the devout multitudes were helped and uplifted in their gross faith by this visible witness to the truth that Christ had died for them upon the bloody tree. Poor souls! they had much to contend with in the way to any good. The leaven of the old pleasure-making pagan civilisation was in them yet (it is in the Italians to this day); and centuries of Northern invasion had made them fierce and cruel, without teaching them Northern virtues. Nay, I question much if their invaders had so many rugged virtues to teach as some people would have us think. They seem to have liked well the sweet corruptions of the land, and to have enjoyed them as furiously and clumsily as bears do the hoarded honey of civilised bees.

After the death of Boniface the lordship of Mantua fell to his famous daughter, Matilda, of whom most have heard. She was a woman of strong will and strong mind; she held her own, and rent from others with a mighty hand, till she had

united nearly all Lombardy under her rule. She was not much given to the domestic affections; she had two husbands (successively), and, if the truth must be told, divorced them both: one because he wished to share her sovereignty, perhaps usurp it; and the other because he was not a warm enough friend of religion. She had no children, and, indeed, in her last marriage contract it was expressly provided that the spouses were to live in chastity together, and as much asunder as possible, Matilda having scruples. She was a great friend to learning,—founded libraries, established the law schools at Bologna, caused the codification of the canon law, corresponded with distant nations, and spoke all the different languages of her soldiers. More than literature, however, she loved the Church; and fought on the side of Pope Gregory VII. in his wars with the Emperor Henry IV. Henry therefore took Mantua from her in 1091, and up to the year 1111 the city enjoyed a kind of republican government under his protection. In that year Henry made peace with Matilda, and appointed her his vice-regent in Italy; but the Mantuans, after twenty years of freedom, were in no humour to feel the weight of the mailed hand of this strong-minded lady.

She was then, moreover, nigh to her death; and, hearing that her physicians had given her up, the Mantuans refused submission. The great Countess rose irefully from her deathbed, and, gathering her army, led it in person, as she always did, laid siege to Mantua by land and water, entered the city in 1114, and did not die till a year after.

The Mantuans now founded a republican government, having unlimited immunities and privileges from the Emperor, whose power over them extended merely to the investiture of their consuls. Their republic was democratic, the legislative council of nine rectors and three curators being elective by the whole people. This government, or something like it, endured for more than a century, during which period the Mantuans seem to have done nothing but war with their neighbours in every direction,—with the Veronese chiefly, with the Cremonese a good deal, with the Paduans, with the Ferrarese, with the Modenese and the Bolognese: indeed, we count up twelve of these wars. Like the English of their time, the Mantuans were famous bowmen, and their shafts took flight all over Lombardy. At the same time they did not omit to fight each other at home; and it must have been a dullish kind of day

in Mantua when there was no street battle between families of the factious nobility. The spectacle of these little Italian powers, racked, and torn, and blazing with pride, aggression, and disorder, within and without, each with its petty chief or victorious faction making war upon the other, and bubbling over with local ambitions, and personal rivalries,—is a spectacle which the traveller of to-day, passing over the countless forgotten battle-fields, and hurried from one famous city to another by railroad, can scarcely conjure up. Parma, Modena, Bologna, Ferrara, Padua, Mantua, Vicenza, Verona, Bassano,—all are now at peace with each other, and firmly united in the national sentiment that travellers were meant to be eaten alive by Italians. Poor old cities! it is hard to conceive of their bygone animosities; still harder to believe that all the villages squatting on the long white roads, and waking up to beg of you as your diligence passes, were once embroiled in deadly and incessant wars. Municipal pride is a good thing, and decentralisation is well; and we have to thank these intensely local little states for genius triply crowned with the glories of literature, art, and science, which Italy might not have produced if she

had been united, and if the little states had loved themselves less and Italy more. Though, after all, there is the doubt whether it is not better to bless one's obscure and happy children with peace and safety, than to give to the world a score of great names at the cost to millions of incalculable misery.

Besides their local wars and domestic feuds, the Mantuans had troubles on a much larger scale,—troubles, indeed, which the Emperor Barbarossa laid out for all Italy. In Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* you can read a pleasanter account of the Emperor's business at Roncaglia about this time than our Italian chroniclers will give you. Carlyle loves a tyrant; and if the tyrant is a ruffian and bully, and especially a German, there are hardly any lengths to which that historian will not go in praise of him. Truly, one would hardly guess, from that picture of Frederick Redbeard at Roncaglia, the standard set before his tent, inviting all men to come and have justice done them, that the Emperor was actually at Roncaglia for the purpose of conspiring with his Diet to take away every vestige of liberty and independence from miserable Italy. Among other cities Mantua lost

her freedom at this Diet, and was ruled by an imperial governor and by consuls of Frederick's nomination till 1167, when she joined the famous Lombard League against him. The leagued cities beat the Emperor at Legnano, and received back their liberties by the treaty of Costanza in 1183; after which, Frederick having withdrawn to Germany, they fell to fighting among themselves again with redoubled zeal, and rent their league into as many pieces as there had been parties to it. In 1236 the Germans again invaded Lombardy, under Frederick II.; and, aided by the troops of the Ghibelline cities, Verona, Padua, Vicenza, and Treviso, besieged Mantua, which surrendered to this formidable union of forces, thus becoming once more an imperial city, and irreparably fracturing the Lombard League. It does not appear, however, that her ancient liberties were withdrawn by Frederick II., and we read that the local wars went on after this with as little interruption as before. The wars went on as usual, and on the old terms, with Verona and Cremona, and there is little in their history to interest us. But in 1256 the famous tyrant of Padua, Eccelino da Romano, who aspired to the dominion of Lombardy, gathered his forces and went and

sat down before Mantua. The Mantuans refused to surrender at this summons; and Eccelino, who had very little notion of what the Paduans were doing in his absence, swore that he would cut down the vines in the Mantuan vineyards, plant new ones, and drink the wine of their grapes before ever he raised the siege. But meantime that conspiracy which ended in Eccelino's ruin had declared itself in Padua, and the tyrant was forced to abandon the siege and look to his dominion of other cities.

After which there was something like peace in Mantua for twenty years, and the city waxed prosperous. Indeed, neither industry nor learning had wholly perished during the wars of the republic, and the people built grist-mills on the Mincio, and cultivated *belles-lettres* to some degree. Men of heavier science likewise flourished, and we read of jurists and astronomers born in those troublous days, as well as of a distinguished physician, who wrote a ponderous dictionary of simples, and dedicated it to King Robert of Naples. But by far the greatest Mantuan of this time was he of whom readers have heard something from a modern poet. He is the haughty Lombard soul, "in the movement

of the eyes honest and slow," whom Dante, ascending the inexplicable heights of Purgatory, beheld; and who, summoning all himself, leaped to the heart of Virgil when he named Mantua: "O Mantuan; I am Sordello, of thine own land!"

Of Virgil the superstition of the Middle Ages had made a kind of wizard, and of Sordello the old writers fable all manner of wonders; he is both knight and poet, and has adventures scarcely less surprising than those of Amadis of Gaul. It is pretty nearly certain that he was born in 1189 of the Visconti di Goito, in the Mantuan country, and that he married Beatrice, a sister of Eccelino, and was in love with the youngest sister of this tyrant, the fair Cunizza, whom Dante places in his *Paradiso*. This final disposition of Cunizza, whom we should hardly think now of assigning a place among the blest, surprised some people even in that day, it seems; for an old commentator defends it, saying: "Cunizza was always, it is true, tender and loving, and properly called a daughter of Venus; but she was also compassionate, benign, and merciful toward those unhappy ones whom her brother cruelly tormented. Therefore the poet is right in feigning to

find her in the sphere of Venus. For if the gentle Cyprians deified their Venus, and the Romans their Flora, how much more honestly may a Christian poet save Cunizza." The lady, whose salvation is on these grounds inexpugnably accomplished, was married to Count Sanbonifazio of Padua, in her twenty-fourth year; and Sordello was early called to this nobleman's court, having already given proofs of his poetic genius. He fell in love with Cunizza, whom her lord, becoming the enemy of the Eccelini, began to ill-treat. A curious glimpse of the manners and morals of that day is afforded by the fact that the brothers of Cunizza conspired to effect her escape with Sordello from her husband's court, and that, under the protection of Eccelino da Romano, the lovers were left unmolested. Eccelino, indeed, loved this weak sister with extraordinary tenderness, and we read of a marvellous complaisance to her intrigues by a man who cared nothing himself for women. Cunizza lived in one of her brother's palaces at Verona, and used to receive there the visits of Sordello after Eccelino had determined to separate them. The poet entered the palace by a postern-gate, and a servant was stationed there to carry Sordello to and fro

upon his back. One night Eccelino took the servant's place, bore the poet to the palace door, and on his return carried him back to the mouth of the alley, where he revealed himself, to the natural surprise and dismay of Sordello, who could have reasonably expected anything but the mild reproof and warning that Eccelino contented himself with giving.

It was probably after this affair ended that Sordello set out upon his travels, visiting most courts, and dwelling long in Provence, where he learned to poetise in the Provençal tongue, in which he thereafter chiefly wrote, and composed many songs. He did not, however, neglect his Lombard language, but composed in it a treatise on the art of defending towns. The Mantuan historian, Volta, says that some of Sordello's Provençal poems exist in manuscript in the Vatican and Chigi libraries at Rome, in the Laurentian at Florence, and the Estense at Modena. He was versed in arms as well as letters, and he caused Mantua to be surrounded with fosses five miles beyond her walls; and, the republic having lodged sovereign powers in his hands when Eccelino besieged the city, Sordello conducted the defence with great courage and ability, and

did not at all betray the place to his obliging brother-in-law, as the latter expected. Verci, from whose *History of the Eccelini* we have drawn the account of Sordello's intrigue with Cunizza, says: "The writers represent this Sordello as the most polite, the most gentle, the most generous man of his time, of middle stature, of beautiful aspect and fine person, of lofty bearing, agile and dexterous, instructed in letters, and a good poet, as his Provençal poems manifest. To these qualities he united military valour in such degree that no knight of his time could stand before him." He was properly the first lord of Mantua, and the republic seems to have died with him in 1284.

The madness which comes upon a people about to be enslaved commonly makes them the agents of their own undoing. The time had now come for the destruction of the last vestiges of liberty in Mantua, and the Mantuans, in their assembly of the Four Hundred and Ninety, voted full power into the hands of the destroyer. That Pinamonte Bonacolsi whom Dante mentions in the twentieth canto of the *Inferno* had been elected captain of the republic, and, feigning to fear aggression from the Marquis of Ferrara, he demanded of the people the

right to banish all enemies of the state. This reasonable demand was granted, and the captain banished, as is well known, all enemies of Pinamonte Bonacolsi. After that, having things his own way, he began to favour public tranquillity, abolished family feuds and the ancient amusement of street battles, and led his enslaved country in the paths of material prosperity; for which he was no doubt lauded in his day by those who thought the Mantuans were not prepared for freedom. He resolved to make the captaincy of the republic hereditary in the Bonacolsi family; and when he died, in 1293, his power descended to his son Bordellone. This Bordellone seems to have been a generous and merciful captain enough, but he loved ease and pleasure; and a rough nephew of his, Guido Botticella, conspired against him to that degree that Bordellone thought best, for peace and quietness' sake, to abdicate in his favour. Guido had the customary war with the Marquis of Ferrara, and then died, and was succeeded by his brother Passerino, a very bad person, whose son at last brought his whole family to grief. The Emperor made him vicar of Modena; and he used the Modenese very cruelly, and shut up Francesco Pico and his sons in a

tower, where he starved them, as the Pisans did Ugolino. In those days, also, the Pope was living at Avignon, and people used to send him money and other comforts there out of Italy. An officer of Passerino, being of Ghibelline politics, attacked one of these richly laden emissaries, and took his spoils, dividing them with Passerino. For this the Pope naturally excommunicated the captain of Mantua, and thereupon his neighbours made a great deal of pious war upon him. But he beat the Bolognese, the most pious of his foes, near Montevoglio, and with his Modenese took from them that famous bucket, about which Tassoni made his great Bernesque epic, *The Rape of the Bucket* (*La Secchia Rapita*), and which still hangs in the tower of the Duomo at Modena. Meantime, while Passerino had done everything to settle himself comfortably and permanently in the tyranny of Mantua, his worthless son Francesco fell in love with the wife of Filippino Gonzaga.

According to the old Mantuan chronicles the Gonzagas were of a royal German line, and had fixed themselves in the Mantuan territory in 770, where they built a castle beyond Po, and began at once to take part in public affairs. They had now grown to

be a family of such consequence that they could not be offended with impunity, and it was a great misfortune to the Bonacolsi that Francesco happened to covet Filippino Gonzaga's wife. He not only did this, but at the same time he was greatly wroth—it is scarcely possible to write seriously of these ridiculous, wicked old shadows—that Gonzaga should have fallen in love with another lady whom he favoured, and, after publicly defaming Filippino's wife, he threatened to kill him for this passion. The insult and the menace sank deep into the bitter hearts of the Gonzagas; and the head of that proud race, Filippino's uncle, Luigi Gonzaga, resolved to avenge the family dishonour. He was a secret and taciturn man, and a pious adulator of his line has praised him for the success with which he dissembled his hatred of the Bonacolsi, while conspiring to sweep them and their dominion away. He won over adherents among the Mantuans, and then made a league with Can Grande of Verona to divide the spoils of the Bonacolsi; and so, one morning, having bribed the guards to open the city gates, he entered Mantua at the head of the banded forces. The population was roused with patriotic cries of "Long live the Mantuan people!"

and, as usual, believed, poor souls, that some good was meant them by those who came to overthrow their tyrants. The Bonacolsi were dreaming that pleasant morning of anything but ruin, and they offered no resistance to the insurrection till it burst out in the great square before the Castello di Corte. They then made a feeble sally from the castle, but were swiftly driven back, and Passerino, wounded to death under the great Gothic archway of the palace, as he retreated, dropped from his languid hands the bridle-rein of his charger and the reins of that government with which he had so long galled Mantua. The unhappy Francesco fled to the cathedral for protection; but the Gonzagas slew him at the foot of the altar. Passerino's brother, a bishop, was flung into a tower to starve, that the Picos might be avenged; and the city of Mantua was liberated.

In that day, when you freed a city from a tyrant, you gave it up to be pillaged by the army of liberation; and Mantua was now sacked by her deliverers. Can Grande's share of the booty alone amounted to a hundred thousand gold florins (about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars). The Mantuans, far from imitating the ungrateful

Paduans, who, when the Crusaders liberated them from Eccelino, grudged these brave fellows three days' pillage of their city, and even wished back their old tyrant,—the Mantuans, we say, seemed not in the least to mind being devoured, but gratefully elected the Gonzaga their captain-general, and purchased him absolution from the Pope for his crimes committed in the sack. They got this absolution for twenty thousand gold florins; and the Pope probably sold it cheap, remembering his old grudge against the Bonacolsi, whom the Gonzaga had overthrown. All this was in the year of grace 1328.

I confess that I am never weary of reading of these good old times in Italy, and that I am here tempted to digress into declamation about them. There is no study more curious and interesting, and I am fond of tracing the two elements of character visible in Italian society, and every individual Italian, as they flow down from the remotest times to these: the one element, that capacity for intellectual culture of the highest degree; the other element, that utter untamableness of passion and feeling. The presence of these contradictory elements seems to influence every relation

of Italian life; — to make it capable of splendour, but barren of comfort; to endear beauty, but not goodness, to the Italian; to lead him to recognise and celebrate virtues, but not to practise them; to produce a civilisation of the mind, and not of the soul.

When Luigi Gonzaga was made lord of Mantua, he left his castle beyond Po, to dwell in the city. In this castle he had dwelt like other lords of his time, in the likeness of a king, spending regally, and keeping state and open house in an edifice strongly built about, with walls encircled with ditches passable by a single drawbridge, and guarded day and night, from castle moat to castle crest, by armed vassals. Hundreds ate daily at his board, which was heaped with a rude and rich profusion, and furnished with carven goblets and plate of gold and silver. In fair weather the banquet-hall stood open to all the winds that blew; in foul, the guests were sheltered from the storm by curtains of oiled linen, and the place was lighted with torches borne by splendidly attired pages. The great saloons of the castle were decked with tapestries of Flanders and Damascus, and the floor was strewn with straw or rushes. The

bed in which the lord and lady slept was the couch of a monarch; the household herded together in the empty chambers, and lay upon the floor like swine. The garden-fields about the castle smiled with generous harvests; the peasant lay down after his toil, at night, in deadly fear of invasion from some neighbouring state which should rob him of everything, and slay him upon the smoking ruins of his home.

In the city to which this lord repaired, the houses were built here and there at caprice, without numbers or regularity, and only distinguished by the figure of a saint, or some pious motto painted above the door. Cattle wandered at will through the crooked, narrow, and filthy streets, which rang with the clamour of frequent feud, and reeked with the blood of the embattled citizens; over all the squalor and wickedness rose the loveliest temples that ever blossomed from man's love of the beautiful, to the honour and glory of God.

In this time Crusaders went to take the Lord's sepulchre from the infidel, while their brothers left at home rose against one another, each petty state against its neighbour, in unsparing wars of rapine and devastation,—wars that slew, or, less merci-

fully, mutilated prisoners,—that snatched the babe from the embrace of its mother, and dashed out its brains upon the desolated hearth. A miserable time of sack, plunder, murder, famine, plague, and unnatural crime; a glorious age, in which flourished the gentlest and sweetest poet that ever sang, and the grimmest and grandest that ever upbraided a godless generation for its sins,—in which Petrarch was crowned with laurel at Rome, and Dante wandered in despair from court to court, learning in the bitterness of his exile's heart,

> "come sa di sale
> Lo pane altrui, e come è duro calle
> Lo scendere e il salir per l' altrui scale."

It was a time ignorant of the simplest comfort, but debauched with the vices of luxury; in which cities repressed the license of their people by laws regulating the length of women's gowns and the outlays at weddings and funerals. Every wild misdeed and cruel crime was committed, and punished by terrible penalties, or atoned for by fines. A fierce democracy reigned, banishing nobles, razing their palaces, and ploughing up the salt-sown sites; till at last, in the uttermost paroxysm of madness, it delivered itself up to lords to be defended

from itself, and was crushed into the abjectest depths of slavery. Literature and architecture flourished, and the sister arts were born amid the struggles of human nature convulsed with every abominable passion.

For nearly four hundred years the Gonzagas continued to rule the city, which the first prince of their line, having well-nigh destroyed, now rebuilt and restored to greater splendour than ever; and it is the Mantua of the Gonzagas which travellers of this day look upon when they visit the famous old city. Their pride and their wealth adorned it; their wisdom and prudence made it rich and prosperous; their valour glorified it; their crimes stain its annals with infamy; their wickedness and weakness ruined it and brought it low. They were a race full of hereditary traits of magnificence, but one reads their history, and learns to love, of all their long succession, only one or two in their pride, learns to pity only one or two in their fall. They were patriotic, but the patriotism of despotic princes is self-love. They were liberal—in spending the revenues of the state for the glory of their family. They were brave, and led many nameless Man-

tuans to die in forgotten battles for alien quarrels which they never understood.

The succession of the Gonzagas was of four captains, ending in 1407; four marquises, ending in 1484; and ten dukes, ending in 1708.

The first of the captains was Luigi, as we know. In his time the great Gothic fabric of the Castello di Corte was built; and, having rebuilt the portions of the city wasted by the sack, he devoted himself, as far as might be in that age, to the arts of peace; and it is remembered of him that he tried to cure the Mantuan air of its feverish unwholesomeness by draining the swampy environs. During his time, Petrarch, making a sentimental journey to the birthplace of Virgil, was splendidly entertained and greatly honoured by him. For the rest, Can Grande of Verona was by no means content with his hundred thousand golden florins of spoil from the sack of the city, but aspired to its seigniory, declaring that he had understood Gonzaga to have promised him it as the condition of alliance against the Bonacolsi. Gonzaga construed the contract differently, and had so little idea of parting with his opinion, that he fought the Scaligero on this point of difference till he died, which befell thirty years after his election to the captaincy.

Him his son Guido succeeded,—a prince already old at the time of his father's death, and of feeble spirit. He shared his dominion with his son Ugolino, excluding the younger brothers from the dominion. These, indignant at the partiality, one night slew their brother Ugolino at a supper he was giving; and, being thereupon admitted to a share in their father's government, had no trouble in obtaining the pardon of the Pope and Emperor. One of the murderers died before the father; the other, named Ludovico, was, on the death of Guido, in 1370, elected to the captaincy, and ruled long, wisely, and well. He loved a peaceful life; and though the Emperor confirmed him in the honours conferred on him by the Mantuans, and made him Vicar-imperial, Ludovico declined to take part with Ghibellines against Guelphs, remained quietly at home, and spent himself much in good works, as if he would thus expiate his bloody crime. He gathered artists, poets, and learned men about him, and did much to foster all arts. In his time Mantua had rest from war, and grew to have twenty-eight thousand inhabitants; but it was not in the nature of a city of the Middle Ages to be long without a calamity of some sort, and it is a kind of re-

lief to know that Mantua, under this peaceful prince, was well-nigh depopulated by a pestilence.

In 1381 he died, and with his son Francesco the blood-letting began again. Indeed, this captain spent nearly his whole life in war with those pleasant people, the Visconti of Milan. He had married the daughter of Barnabo Visconti, but, discovering her to be unfaithful to him, or believing her so, he caused her to be put to death, refusing all her family's intercessions for mercy. After that a heavy sadness fell upon him, and he wandered aimlessly about in many Italian cities, and at last married a second time, taking to wife Margherita Malatesta. He was a prince of high and generous soul, and of manly greatness rare in his time. There came once a creature of the Visconti to him, with a plot for secretly taking off his masters; but the Gonzaga (he must have been thought an eccentric man by his neighbours) dismissed the wretch with scornful horror. I am sure the reader will be glad to know that he finally beat the Visconti in fair fight, and (the pest still raging in Mantua) lived to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. When he returned, he compiled the city's statutes, divided the

town into four districts, and named its streets. So he died.

And after this prince had made his end, there came another Francesco, or Gianfrancesco, who was created Marquis of Mantua by the Emperor Sigismund. He was a friend of war, and having been the ward of the Venetian Republic (Venice was fond of this kind of trust, and sometimes adopted princely persons as her children, among whom the reader will of course remember the Queen of Cyprus, and the charming Bianca Capello, whose beauty and skilful knowledge of the use of poisons made her Grand Duchess of Tuscany some years after she eloped from Venice), he became the leader of her armies on the death of Carmagnola, who survived the triumphal reception given him by the most Serene Senate only a very short time.[1] The Gonzaga took Verona and Padua for the republic, and met the Milanese in many battles. Venice was then insolently profuse with the spoils of the Orient, and it is probable that the

[1] It seems scarcely worth while to state the fact that Carmagnola, suspected of treasonable correspondence with the Visconti, was recalled to Venice to receive distinguished honours from the republic. The Senate was sitting in the hall of the Grand Council when he appeared, and they detained him

Marquis of Mantua acquired there that taste for splendour which he introduced into his hitherto frugal little state. We read of his being in Venice in 1414, when the Jewellers and Goldsmiths' Guild gave a tournament in the Piazza San Marco, offering as prizes to the victorious lances a collar enriched with pearls and diamonds, the work of the jewellers, and two helmets excellently wrought by the goldsmiths. On this occasion the Gonzaga, with two hundred and sixty Mantuan gentlemen, mounted on superb horses, contested the prizes with the Marquis of Ferrara, at the head of two hundred Ferrarese, equally mounted, and attended by their squires and pages, magnificently dressed. There were sixty thousand spectators of the encounter. "Both the Marquises," says Mutinelli in his *Annali Urbani*, "being each assisted by fourteen well-armed cavaliers, combated valorously at the barrier, and were both judged worthy of the first prize: a Mantuan cavalier took the second."

there with various compliments till night fell. Then, instead of lights, the Sbirri appeared, and seized Carmagnola. "I am a dead man," he exclaimed, on beholding them. And so indeed he was; for, three days after, he was led out of prison, and beheaded between the pillars of the Piazzetta.

The Marquis Gonzaga was the first of his line who began that royal luxury of palaces with which Mantua was adorned. He commenced the Ducal Palace; but before he went far with the work, he fell a prey to the science then much affected by Italian princes, but still awaiting its last refinement from the gifted Lucrezia Borgia. The poor Marquis was poisoned by his wife's paramour, and died in the year 1444. Against this prince, our advocate Arrighi records the vandalism of causing to be thrown down and broken in pieces the antique statue of Virgil, which stood in one of the public places of Mantua, and of which the head is still shown in the Museum of the city. In all times, the Mantuans had honoured, in divers ways, their great poet, and at certain epochs had coined money bearing his face. With the common people he had a kind of worship (more likely as wizard than as poet), and they celebrated annually some now-forgotten event by assembling with songs and dances about the statue of Virgil, which was destroyed by the uncle of the Marquis, Malatesta, rather than by the Marquis's own order. This ill-conditioned person is supposed to have been "vexed because our Mantuan people thought it their highest

glory to be fellow-citizens of the prince of poets." We can better sympathise with the advocate's indignation at this barbarity than with his blame of Francesco for having consented, by his acceptance of the marquisate, to become a prince of the Roman Empire. Mantua was thus subjected to the Emperors, but liberty had long been extinguished; and the voluntary election of the Council, which bestowed the captaincy on each succeeding generation of the Gonzagas, was a mere matter of form, and of course.

The next prince, Lodovico Gonzaga, was an austere man, and had been bred in a hard school, if I may believe some of our old chroniclers, whom, indeed, I sometimes suspect of being not altogether faithful. It is said that his father loved his younger brother better than him, and that Lodovico ran away in his boyhood, and took refuge with his father's hereditary enemies, the Visconti. To make dates agree, it must have been the last of these, for the line failed during Lodovico's time, and he had wars with the succeeding Sforza. In the day of his escapade, Milan was at war with Mantua and with Venice, and the Marquis Gonzaga was at the head of the united armies, as we have already seen. So the

father and son met in several battles; though the Visconti, out of love for the boy, and from a sentiment of piety somewhat amazing in them, contrived that he should never actually encounter his parent face to face. Lodovico came home after the wars, wearing a long beard; and his mother called her son "the Turk," a nickname that he never lost.

Il Turco was a lover of the arts and of letters, and he did many works to enrich and beautify the city. He established the first printing-office in Mantua, where the first book printed was the *Decamerone* of Boccaccio. He founded a college of advocates, and he dug canals for irrigation; and the prosperity of Mantuan manufacturers in his time may be inferred from the fact that, when the King of Denmark paid him a visit, in 1474, the merchants decked their shops with five thousand pieces of fine Mantuan cloth.

The Marquis made his brilliant little court the resort of the arts and letters; and hither from Florence came once the elegant Politian, who composed his tragedy of *Orfeo* in Mantua, and caused it to be first represented before Lodovico. But it must be confessed that this was a soil in which art flourished better than literature, and that even born

Mantuan poets went off, after a while, and blossomed in other air. The painter Mantegna, whom the Marquis invited from Padua, passed his whole life here, painting for the Marquis in the palaces and churches. The prince loved him, and gave him a house, and bestowed other honours upon him; and Mantegna executed for Lodovico his famous pictures representing the Triumph of Julius Cæsar.[1] It was divided into nine compartments, and, as a frieze, went round the upper part of Lodovico's newly erected palace of San Sebastian. Mantegna also painted a hall in the Castello di Corte, called the Stanza di Mantegna, and there, among other subjects of fable and of war, made the portraits of Lodovico and his wife. It was partly the wish to see such works of Mantegna as still remained in Mantua that took us thither; and it was chiefly this wish that carried us, the morning after our arrival, to the Castello di Corte, or the Ducal Palace. Our thirst for Mantegnas was destined to be in no degree satisfied in this pile, but it was full of things to tempt us to forget Mantegna, and to make us more and more interested in the Gonzagas and their Mantua.

[1] Now at Hampton Court.

It is taken for granted that no human being ever yet gained an idea of any building from the most artful description of it; but if the reader cares to fancy a wide piazza, or open square, with a church upon the left hand, immense, uninteresting edifices on the right, and an ugly bishop's palace of Renaissance taste behind him, he may figure before him as vastly and magnificently as he pleases the superb Gothic front of the Castello di Corte. This façade is the only one in Italy that reminds you of the most beautiful building in the world, the Ducal Palace at Venice; and it does this merely by right of its short pillars and deep Gothic arches in the ground story, and the great breadth of wall that rises above them, unbroken by the second line of columns which relieves and lightens this wall in the Venetian palace. It stands at an extremity of the city, upon the edge of the broad fresh-water lagoon, and is of such extent as to include within its walls a whole court-city of theatre, church, stables, playground, course for riding, and several streets. There is a far older edifice adjoining the Castello di Corte, which Guido Bonacolsi began, and which witnessed the bloody end of his line, when Louis Gonzaga surprised and slew his last successor. But

the palace itself is all the work of the Gonzagas, and it remains the monument of their kingly state and splendid pride.

It is known that the works of Mantegna suffered grievously in the wars of the last century, and his memory has faded so dim in this palace where he wrought, that the Custode could not understand the curiosity of the foreigners concerning the old painter; and certainly Giulio Romano has stamped himself more ineffaceably than Mantegna upon Mantua. In the Ducal Palace are seen vividly contrasted the fineness and strength, the delicacy and courage of the fancy, which, rather than the higher gift of imagination, characterise Giulio's work. There is such an airy refinement and subtle grace in the pretty grotesques with which he decorates a chamber; there is such daring luxury of colour and design in the pictures, for which his grand halls are merely the frames. No doubt I could make fine speeches about these paintings; but who, not seeing them, would be the wiser, after the best description and the choicest critical disquisition? In fact, the travellers themselves found it pleasanter, after a while, to yield to the guidance of the Custode, and to enjoy the stupider marvels of the place, than to do the

set and difficult admiration of the works of art. So, passing the apartments in good preservation (the Austrian Emperors had taken good care of some parts of the palace of one of their first Italian possessions), they did justice to the splendour of the satin beds and the other upholstery work; they admired rich carpentering and costly toys; they dwelt on marvellous tapestries (among which the tapestry copies of Raphael's cartoons, woven at Mantua in the fifteenth century, are certainly worthy of wonder); and they expressed the proper amazement at the miracles of art which caused figures frescoed in the ceilings to turn with them, and follow and face them from whatever part of the room they chose to look. Nay, they even enjoyed the Hall of the Rivers, on the sides of which the usual river-gods were painted, in the company of the usual pottery, from which they pour their founts, and at the end of which there was an abominable little grotto of what people call, in modern landscape-gardening, rock-work, out of the despair with which its unmeaning ugliness fills them. There were busts of several Mantuan duchesses in the gallery, which were interesting, and the pictures were so bad as to molest no one. There was, besides

all this, a hanging-garden in this small Babylon, on which the travellers looked with a doleful regret that they were no longer of the age when a hanging-garden would have brought supreme comfort to the soul. It occupied a spacious oblong, had a fountain and statues, trees and flowers, and would certainly have been taken for the surface of the earth, had not the Custode proudly pointed out that it was on a level with the second floor, on which they stood.

After that they wandered through a series of unused, dismantled apartments and halls, melancholy with faded fresco, dropping stucco, and mutilated statues of plaster, and came at last upon a balcony overlooking the Cavallerizza, which one of the early dukes built after a design by the inevitable Giulio Romano. It is a large square, and was meant for the diversion of riding on horseback. Balconies go all round it between those thick columns, finely twisted, as we see them in that cartoon of Raphael, "The Healing of the Lame Man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple;" and here once stood the jolly dukes and the jolly ladies of their light-hearted court, and there below rode the gay, insolent, intriguing courtiers, and outside groaned the city under the heavy

extortions of the tax-gatherers. It is all in weather-worn stucco, and the handsome square is planted with trees. The turf was now cut and carved by the heavy wheels of the Austrian baggage-wagons constantly passing through the court to carry munitions to the fortress outside, whose black guns grimly overlook the dead lagoon. A sense of desolation had crept over the sightseers, with that strange sickness of heart which one feels in the presence of ruin not to be lamented, and which deepened into actual pain as the Custode clapped his hands and the echo buffeted itself against the forlorn stucco, and up from the trees rose a score of sullen, slumberous owls, and flapped heavily across the lonesome air with melancholy cries. It only needed, to crush these poor strangers, that final touch which the Custode gave, as they passed from the palace through the hall in which are painted the Gonzagas, and in which he pointed out the last Duke of Mantua, saying he was deposed by the Emperor for "felony," and somehow conveying the idea of horse-stealing and counterfeiting on the part of his Grace.

A very different man from this rogue was our old friend Lodovico, who also, however, had his troubles. He was an enemy of the

Ghibellines, and fought them a great deal. Of course he had the habitual wars with Milan, and he was obliged to do battle with his own brother Carlo to some extent. This Gonzaga had been taken prisoner by Sforza; and Lodovico, having paid for him a ransom of sixty thousand florins of gold (which Carlo was scarcely worth), seized the fraternal lands, and held them in pledge of repayment. Carlo could not pay, and tried to get back his possessions by war. Vexed with these and other contentions, Lodovico was also unhappy in his son, whose romance I may best tell in the words of the history,[1] from which I take it:—

"Lodovico Gonzaga, having agreed with the Duke of Bavaria to take his daughter Margherita as wife for his (Lodovico's) first-born, Federico, and the young man having refused her, Lodovico was so much enraged that he sought to imprison him; but the Marchioness Barbara, mother of Federico, caused him to fly from the city till his father's anger should be abated. Federico departed with six attendants;[2] but this

[1] Volta: *Storia di Mantova.*

[2] The *Fioretto delle Cronache* says "persons of gentle condition."

flight caused still greater displeasure to his father, who now declared him banished, and threatened with heavy penalties any one who should give him help or favour. Federico, therefore, wandered about with these six attendants in divers places, and finally arrived in Naples; but having already spent all his substance, and not daring to make himself known for fear of his father, he fell into great want, and so into severe sickness. His companions, having nothing wherewith to live, and not knowing any trade by which to gain their bread, did menial services fit for day-labourers, and sustained their lord with their earnings, he remaining hidden in a poor woman's house where they all dwelt.

"The Marchioness had sent many messengers in divers provinces with money to find her son, but they never heard any news of him; so that they thought him dead, not hearing anything, either, of his attendants. Now it happened that one of those who sought Federico came to Naples, and presented himself to the king with a letter from the said lady, praying that he should make search in his territory for a company of seven men, giving the name and description of each. The king caused this search

to be made by the heads of the district; and one of these heads told how in his district there were six Lombard men (not knowing of Federico, who lay ill), but that they were labourers, and of base condition. The king determined to see them; and they being come before him, he demanded who they were, and how many; as they were not willing to discover their lord, on being asked their names they gave others, so that the king, not being able to learn anything, would have dismissed them. But the messenger sent by the Marchioness knew them, and said to the king, 'Sire, these are the attendants of him whom I seek; but they have changed their names.' The king caused them to be separated one from another, and then asked them of their lord; and they, finding themselves separated, minutely narrated everything; and the king immediately sent for Federico, whom his officers found miserably ill on a heap of straw. He was brought to the palace, where the king ordered him to be cared for, sending the messenger back to his mother to advise her how the men had been found, and in what great misery. The Marchioness went to her husband, and, having cast herself at his feet, besought him of a grace. The Marquis

answered that he would grant everything, so it did not treat of Federico. Then the lady opened him the letter of the king of Naples, which had such effect that it softened the soul of the Marquis, showing him in how great misery his son had been; and so, giving the letter to the Marchioness, he said, 'Do that which pleases you.' The Marchioness straightway sent the prince money, and clothes to clothe him, in order that he should return to Mantua; and having come, the son cast himself at his father's feet, imploring pardon for himself and for his attendants; and he pardoned them, and gave those attendants enough to live honourably and like noblemen, and they were called the Faithful of the House of Gonzaga, and from them come the *Fedeli* of Mantua.

"The Marquis then, not to break faith, caused Federico to take Margherita, daughter of the Duke of Bavaria, for his wife, and celebrated the nuptials splendidly; so that there remained the greatest love between father and son."

The son succeeded to the father's dominion in 1478; and it is recorded of him in the *Flower of the Chronicles*, that he was a hater of idleness, and a just man, greatly

beloved by his people. They chiefly objected to him that he placed a Jew, Eusebio Malatesta, at the head of civil affairs; and this Jew was indeed the cause of great mischief: for Ridolfo Gonzaga, coming to reside with his wife for a time at the court of his brother the Marquis, Malatesta fell in love with her. She repelled him; and the bitter Jew thereupon so poisoned her husband's mind with accusations against her that he took her home to his town of Lazzaro, and there put the unhappy and innocent lady to death by the headsman's hand in the great square of the city.

Federico was Marquis only six years, and died in 1484, leaving his marquisate to his son Francesco, the most ambitious, warlike, restless, splendid prince of his magnificent race. This Gonzaga wore a beard, and brought the custom into fashion in Italy again. He founded the famous breed of Mantuan horses, and gave them about free-handedly to other sovereigns of his acquaintance. To the English king he presented a steed which, if we may trust history, could have been sold for almost its weight in gold. He was so fond of hunting that he kept two hundred dogs of the chase, and one hundred and fifty birds of prey.

Of course this Gonzaga was a soldier, and indeed he loved war better even than hunting, and delighted so much in personal feats of arms that, concealing his name and quality, in order that the combat should be in all things equal, he was wont to challenge renowned champions wherever he heard of them, and to meet them in the lists. Great part of his life was spent in the field; and he fought in turn on nearly all sides of the political questions then agitating Italy. In 1495 he was at the head of the Venetian and other Italian troops when they beat the French under Charles VIII. at Taro, and made so little use of their victory as to let their vanquished invaders escape from them after all. Nevertheless, if the Gonzaga did not here show himself a great general he did great feats of personal valour, penetrating to the midst of the French forces, wounding the king, and with his own hand taking prisoner the great Bastard of Bourbon. Venice paid him ten thousand ducats for gaining the victory, such as it was, and when peace was made he went to visit the French king at Vercelli; and there Charles gave his guest a present of two magnificent horses, which the Gonzaga returned yet more splendidly in kind. About five years

later he was again at war with the French, and helped the Aragonese drive them out of Naples. In 1506, Pope Julius II. made him leader of the armies of the Church (for he had now quitted the Venetian service), and he reduced the city of Bologna to obedience to the Holy See. In 1509 he joined the League of Cambray against Venice, and, being made Imperial Captain-General, was taken prisoner by the Venetians. They liberated him, however, the following year; and in 1513 we find him at the head of the league against the French.

A curious anecdote of this Gonzaga's hospitality is also illustrative of the anomalous life of those times, when good faith had as little to do with the intercourse of nations as at present; but good fortune, when she appeared in the world, liked to put on a romantic and melodramatic guise. An ambassador from the Grand Turk, on his way to Rome, was taken by an enemy of the Pope, despoiled of all his money, and left planted, as the Italians expressively say, at Ancona. This ambassador was come to concert with Alexander VI. the death of Bajazet's brother, prisoner in the Pope's hands, and he bore the Pope a present of 50,000 gold ducats. It was Gian Della

Rovere who seized and spoiled him, and sent the papers (letters of the Pope and Sultan) to Charles VIII. of France, to whom Alexander had been obliged to give the Grand Turk's brother. The magnificent Gonzaga hears of the Turk's embarrassing mischance, sends and fetches him to Mantua, clothes him, puts abundant money in his purse, and despatches him on his way. The Sultan, in reward of this courtesy to his servant, gave a number of fine horses to the Marquis, who, possibly being tired of presenting his own horses, returned the Porte a ship-load of excellent Mantuan cheeses. This interchange of compliments seems to have led to a kind of romantic friendship between the Gonzaga and the Grand Turk, who did occasionally interest himself in the affairs of the Christian dogs; and who, when Francesco lay prisoner at Venice, actually wrote to the Senate, and asked his release as a personal grace to him, the Grand Turk. And Francesco was, thereupon, let go; the canny republic being willing to do the Sultan any sort of cheap favour.

This Gonzaga, being so much engaged in war, seems to have had little time for the adornment of his capital. The Church of Our Lady of Victory is the only edifice

which he added to it; and this was merely in glorification of his own triumph over the French at Taro. Mantegna painted an altar-piece for it, representing the Marquis and his wife on their knees before the Virgin, in act of rendering her thanks for the victory. The French nation avenged itself for whatever wrong was done its pride in this picture by stealing it away from Mantua in Napoleon's time; and it now hangs in the gallery of the Louvre.

Francesco died in 1519; and after him his son, Federico II., the first Duke of Mantua, reigned some twenty-one years, and died in 1540. The marquisate in his time was made a duchy by the Emperor Charles V., to whom the Gonzaga had given efficient aid in his wars against the French. This was in the year 1530; and three years later, when the Duke of Monferrato died, and the inheritance of his opulent little state was disputed by the Duke of Savoy, by the Marquis of Saluzzo, and by the Gonzaga, who had married the late Duke's daughter, Charles's influence secured it to the Mantuan. The dominions of the Gonzagas had now reached their utmost extent, and these dominions were not curtailed till the deposition of Fernando

Carlo in 1708, when Monferrato was adjudged to the Duke of Savoy, and afterwards confirmed to him by treaty. It was separated from the capital of the Gonzagas by a wide extent of alien territory, but they held it with a strong hand, embellished the city, and founded there the strongest citadel in Italy.

Federico, after his wars for the Emperor, appears to have reposed in peace for the rest of his days, and to have devoted himself to the adornment of Mantua and the aggrandising of his family. His court was the home of many artists; and Titian painted for him the Twelve Cæsars, which the Germans stole when they sacked the city in 1630. But his great agent and best beloved genius was Giulio Pippi, called Romano, who was conducted to Mantua by pleasant Count Baldassare Castiglione.

Pleasant Count Baldassare Castiglione! whose incomparable book of the *Cortigiano* succeeded in teaching his countrymen every gentlemanly grace but virtue. He was born at Casatico in the Mantovano, in the year 1476, and went in his boyhood to be schooled at Milan, where he learnt the profession of arms. From Milan he went to Rome, where he exercised his profession of

arms till the year 1504, when he was called to gentler uses at the court of the elegant Dukes of Urbino. He lived there as courtier and court-poet, and he returned to Rome as the ambassador from Urbino. Meantime his liege, Francesco Gonzaga, was but poorly pleased that so brilliant a Mantuan should spend his life in the service and ornament of other princes, and Castiglione came back to his native country about the year 1516. He married in Mantua, and there finished his famous book of *The Courtier*, and succeeded in winning back the favour of his prince. Federico, the Duke, made him ambassador to Rome in 1528; and Baldassare did his master two signal services there,—he procured him to be named head of all the Papal forces, and he found him Giulio Romano. So the Duke suffered him to go as the Pope's Nuncio to Spain, and Baldassare finished his courtly days at Toledo in 1529.

The poet made a detour to Mantua on his way to Spain, taking with him the painter, whom the Duke received with many caresses, as Vasari says, presented him a house honourably furnished, ordered provision for him and his pupils, gave them certain brave suits of velvet and satin, and, seeing that

Giulio had no horse, called for his own favourite Luggieri, and bestowed it on him. Ah! they knew how to receive painters, those fine princes, who had merely to put their hands into their people's pocket, and take out what florins they liked. So the Duke presently set the artist to work, riding out with him through the gate of San Bastiano to some stables about a bow-shot from the walls, in the midst of a flat meadow, where he told Giulio that he would be glad (if it could be done without destroying the old walls) to have such buildings added to the stables as would serve him for a kind of lodge, to come out and merrily sup in when he liked. Whereupon Giulio began to think out the famous Palazzo del T.

This painter is an unlucky kind of man, to whom all criticism seems to have agreed to attribute great power and deny great praise. Castiglione had found him at Rome, after the death of his master Raphael, when his genius, for good or for ill, began for the first time to find original expression. At Mantua, where he spent all the rest of his busy life, it is impossible not to feel in some degree the force of this genius. As in Venice all the Madonnas in

the street corner shrines have some touch of colour to confess the painter's subjection to Titian or Tintoretto; as in Vicenza the edifices are all in Greekish taste, and stilted upon pedestals in honour and homage to Palladio; as in Parma Correggio has never died, but lives to this day in the mouths and chiaroscuro effects of all the figures in all the pictures painted there;—so in Mantua Giulio Romano is to be found in the lines of every painting and every palace. It is wonderful to see, in these little Italian cities which have been the homes of great men, how no succeeding generation has dared to wrong the memory of them by departing in the least from their precepts upon art. One fancies, for instance, the immense scorn with which the Vicentines would greet the audacity of any young architect who dared to think Gothic instead of Palladian Greek, and how they would put him to shame by asking him if he knew more than Palladio about architecture!

Giulio Romano did a little of everything for the Dukes of Mantua,—from painting the most delicate little fresco for a bedchamber, to restraining the Po and the Mincio with immense dykes, restoring ancient edifices and building new ones, draining swamps and de-

molishing and reconstructing whole streets, painting palaces and churches, and designing the city slaughter-house. He grew old and very rich in the service of the Gonzagas; but though Mrs. Jameson says he commanded respect by a sense of his own dignity as an artist, the Bishop of Casale, who wrote the *Annali di Mantova*, says that the want of nobility and purity in his style, and his "gallant inventions, were conformable to his own sensual life, and that he did not disdain to prostitute himself to the infamies of Aretino."

His great architectural work in Mantua is the Palazzo del T, or Tè, as it is now written. It was first called Palazza del T, from the convergence of roads there in the form of that letter; and the modern Mantuans call it Del Tè, from the superstition, transmitted to us by the Custode of the Ducal Palace, that the Gonzagas merely used it on pleasant afternoons to take tea in!—so curiously has latter-day guidemanship interpreted the jolly purpose expressed by the Duke to Giulio. I say nothing to control the reader's choice between T and Tè, and merely adhere to the elder style out of reverence for the past. It is certain that the air of the plain on which the palace stands is

most unwholesome, and it may have been true that the dukes never passed the night there. Federico did not intend to build more than a lodge in this place; but fascinated with the design offered him by Giulio, he caused the artist to go on, and contrive him a palace instead. It stands, as Vasari says, about a good bow-shot from one of the city's gates; and, going out to see the palace on our second day in Mantua, we crossed a drawbridge guarded by Austrian soldiers. Below languished a bed of sullen ooze, tangled and thickly grown with long, villanous grasses, and sending up a damp and deathly stench, which made all the faces we saw look feverish and sallow. Already at that early season the air was foul and heavy, and the sun, faintly making himself seen through the dun sky of the dull spring day, seemed sick to look upon the place, where, indeed, the only happy and lively things were the clouds of gnats that danced before us, and welcomed us to the Palazzo del T. Damp ditches surround the palace, in which these gnats seemed to have peculiar pleasure; and they took possession of the portico of the stately entrance of the edifice as we went in, and held it faithfully till we returned.

In one of the first large rooms are the life-size portraits of the six finest horses of the Gonzaga stud, painted by the pupils of Giulio Romano, after the master's designs. The paintings attest the beauty of the Mantuan horses, and the pride and fondness of their ducal owners; and trustworthy critics have praised their eminent truth. But it is only the artist or the horseman who can delight in them long; and we presently left them for the other chambers, in which the invention of Giulio had been used to please himself rather than his master. I scarcely mean to name the wonders of the palace, having, indeed, general associations with them, rather than particular recollections of them.

One of the most famous rooms is the Chamber of Psyche (the apartments are not of great size), of which the ceiling is by Giulio and the walls are by his pupils. The whole illustrates, with every variety of fantastic invention, the story of Psyche as told by Apuleius, and deserves to be curiously studied as a part of the fair outside of a superb and corrupt age, the inside of which was full of rottenness. The civilisation of Italy, as a growth from the earliest Pagan times, and only modified by Chris-

tianity and the admixture of Northern blood and thought, is yet to be carefully analysed; and until this analysis is made, discussion of certain features must necessarily be incomplete and unsatisfactory. No one, however, can stand in this Chamber of Psyche and not feel how great reality the old mythology must still have had, not only for the artists that painted the room, but for the people who inhabited it and enjoyed it. I do not say that they believed it as they believed in the vital articles of Christian faith, but that they accepted it with the same spirit as they accepted the martyrology of the Church; and that to the fine gentlemen and ladies of the court, those jolly satyrs and careless nymphs, those Cupids and Psyches, and Dianas and Venuses, were of the same verity as the Fathers of the Desert, the Devil, and the great body of the saints. If they did not pray to them, they swore by them, and their names were much oftener on their lips; and the art of the time was so thoroughly Pagan, that it forgot all Christian holiness, and clung only to heathen beauty. When it had not actually a mythologic subject to deal with, it paganised Christian themes. St. Sebastian was made to look like Apollo, and Mary Magdalene was

merely a tearful, triste Venus. There is scarcely a ray of feeling in Italian art since Raphael's time which suggests Christianity in the artist, or teaches it to the beholder. In confessedly Pagan subjects it was happiest, as in the life of Psyche, in this room; and here it inculcated a gay and spirited license, and an elegant absence of decency.[1]

Returning to the city, we visited the house of Giulio Romano, which stands in one of the fine, lonesome streets, and at the outside of which we looked. The artist designed it himself; and it is very pretty, with delicacy of feeling in the fine stucco ornamentation, but is not otherwise interesting.

We passed it, continuing our way toward the Arsenal, near which we had seen the women at work washing the linen coats of the garrison in the twilight of the evening before; and we now saw them again from the bridge, on which we paused to look at a picturesque bit of modern life in Mantua.

The ruin in the famous room frescoed with the Fall of the Giants commences on the very door-jambs, which are painted in broken and tumbling brickwork; and throughout there is a prodigiousness which does not surprise, and a bigness which does not impress. In Kugler's *Hand-book of Italian Painting* are two illustrations, representing parts of the fresco which give a fair idea of the whole.

The washing-machine (when the successful instrument is invented) may do its work as well, but not so charmingly, as these Mantuan girls did. They washed the linen in a clear, swift-running stream, diverted from the dam of the Mincio to furnish mill-power within the city wall; and we could look down the watercourse past old arcades of masonry half submerged in it, past pleasant angles of houses and a lazy mill-wheel turning slowly, slowly, till our view ended in the gallery of a time-worn palace, through the columns of which was seen the blue sky. Under the bridge the stream ran very strong and lucid, over long, green, undulating water-grasses, which it loved to dimple over and play with. On the right were the laundresses under the eaves of a wooden shed, each kneeling, as their custom is, in a three-sided box, and leaning forward over the washboard that sloped down into the water. As they washed they held the linen in one hand, and rubbed it with the other; then heaped it into a mass upon the board, and beat it with great two-handed blows of a stick. They sang, meanwhile, one of those plaintive airs of which the Italian peasants are fond, and which rose in indescribable pathos, pulsing with their blows,

and rhythmic with the graceful movement of their forms. Many of the women were young,—though they were of all ages,—and the prettiest among them was third from where we stood upon the bridge. She caught sight of the sketch-book which one of the travellers carried, and pointed it out to the rest, who could hardly settle to their work to be sketched. Presently an idle baker, whose shop adjoined the bridge, came out and leaned upon the parapet, and bantered the girls. "They are drawing the prettiest," he said, at which they all bridled a little; and she who knew herself to be prettiest hung her head and rubbed furiously at the linen. Long before the artist had finished the sketch, the lazy, good-humoured crowd which the public practice of the fine arts always attracts in Italy, had surrounded the strangers, and were applauding, commenting, comparing, and absorbing every stroke as it was made. When the book was closed and they walked away, a number of boys straggled after them some paces, inspired by a curious longing and regret, like that which leads boys to the eager inspection of fireworks when they have gone out. We lost them at the first turning of the street, whither the melan-

choly chorus of the women's song had also followed us, and where it died pathetically away.

In the evening we walked to the Piazza Virgiliana, the beautiful space laid out and planted with trees by the French, at the beginning of this century, in honour of the great Mantuan poet. One of its bounds is the shore of the lake which surrounds the city, and from which now rose ghostly vapours on the still twilight air. Down the slow, dull current moved one of the picturesque black boats of the Po; and beyond, the level landscape had a pleasant desolation that recalled the scenery of the Middle Mississippi. It might have been here in this very water that the first-born of our first Duke of Mantua fell from his boat while hunting water-fowl in 1550, and took a fever of which he died only a short time after his accession to the sovereignty of the duchy. At any rate, the fact of the accident brings me back from lounging up and down Mantua to my grave duty of chronicler. Francesco's father had left him in childhood to the care of his uncle, the Cardinal Hercules, who ruled Mantua with a firm and able hand, increasing the income of the state, spending less upon the ducal

stud, and cutting down the number of mouths at the ducal table from eight hundred to three hundred and fifty-one. His justice tended to severity rather than mercy; but reformers of our own time will argue well of his heart, that he founded in that time a place of refuge and retirement for abandoned women. Good Catholics will also be pleased to know that he was very efficient in suppressing the black heresy of Calvin, which had crept into Mantua in his day,—probably from Ferrara, where the black heretic himself was then, or about then, in hiding under the protection of the ill-advised Marchioness Renée. The good Cardinal received the Pope's applause for his energy in this matter, and I doubt not his hand fell heavily on the Calvinists. Of the Duke who died so young, the Venetian ambassador thought it worth while to write what I think it worth while to quote, as illustrating the desire of the Senate to have careful knowledge of its neighbours: "He is a boy of melancholy complexion. His eyes are full of spirit, but he does not delight in childish things, and seems secretly proud of being lord. He has an excellent memory, and shows much inclination for letters."

His brother Guglielmo, who succeeded him in 1550, seems to have had the same affection for learning; but he was wilful, harsh, and cruelly ambitious, and cared, an old writer says, for nothing so much as perpetuating the race of the Gonzagas in Mantua. He was a hunchback, and some of his family (who could not have understood his character) tried to persuade him not to assume the ducal dignity; but his haughty temper soon righted him in their esteem, and it is said that all the courtiers put on humps in honour of the Duke. He was not a great warrior, and there are few picturesque incidents in his reign. Indeed, nearly the last of these in Mantuan history was the coronation at Mantua of the excellent poet Lodovico Ariosto, by Charles v., in 1532, Federico II. reigning. But the Mantuans of Guglielmo's day were not without their sensations, for three Japanese ambassadors passed through their city on the way to Rome. They were also awakened to religious zeal by the reappearance of Protestantism among them. The heresy was happily suppressed by the Inquisition, acting under Pius v., though with small thanks to Duke William, who seems to have taken no fervent part in the

persecutions. "The proceedings," says Cantù, writing before slavery had been abolished, "were marked by those punishments which free America inflicts upon the negroes to-day, and which a high conception of the mission of the Church moves us to deplore." The Duke must have made haste after this to reconcile himself with the Church; for we read that two years later he was permitted to take a particle of the Blood of Christ from the church of St. Andrea to that of Sta. Barbara, where he deposited it in a box of crystal and gold, and caused his statue to be placed before the shrine in the act of adoring the relic.

Duke William managed his finances so well as to leave his spendthrift son Vincenzo a large sum of money to make away with after his death. Part of this, indeed, he had earned by obedience to his father's wishes in the article of matrimony. The prince was in love with the niece of the Duke of Bavaria, very lovely, and certainly high-born enough, but having unhappily only sixty thousand crowns to her portion. So she was not to be thought of, and Vincenzo married the sister of the Duke of Parma, of whom he grew so fond, that, though two years of marriage brought them

no children, he could scarce be persuaded to suffer her divorce. This happened, however, and the prince's affections were next engaged by the daughter of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. The lady had a portion of three hundred thousand crowns, which entirely charmed the frugal-minded Duke William, and Vincenzo married her.

There is not much to be said in praise of Vincenzo; but it ought to be remembered of him, that at his solicitation the most clement lord of Ferrara liberated from durance in the hospital in St. Anna his poet Tasso, whom he had kept shut in that madhouse seven years. On his delivery, Tasso addressed his *Discorso* to Vincenzo's kinsman, the learned Cardinal Scipio Gonzaga; and to this prelate he submitted for correction the *Gerusalemme*, as did Guarini the *Pastor Fido*.

When Vincenzo came to power he found a fat treasury, which he enjoyed after the fashion of the time, and which, having a princely passion for every costly pleasure, he soon emptied. He was crowned in 1587; and on his coronation day rode through the streets throwing gold to the people, after the manner of the Mantuan Dukes. He kept up an army of six thousand men,

among a population of eighty thousand all told; and maintained as his bodyguard "fifty archers on horseback, who also served with the arquebuse, and fifty light-horsemen for the guard of his own person, who were all excellently mounted, the Duke possessing such a noble stud of horses that he always had five hundred at his service, and kept in stable one hundred and fifty of marvellous beauty." He lent the Spanish king two hundred thousand pounds out of his father's sparings: and when the Archduchess of Austria, Margherita, passed through Mantua on her way to wed Philip II. of Spain, he gave her a diamond ring worth twelve thousand crowns. Next after women, he was madly fond of the theatre, and spent immense sums for actors. He would not, indeed, cede in splendour to the greatest monarchs, and in his reign of fifteen years he squandered fifty million crowns! No one will be surprised to learn from a contemporary writer in Mantua, that this excellent prince was adorned with all the Christian virtues; nor to be told by a later historian, that in Vincenzo's time Mantua was the most corrupt city in Europe. A satire of the year 1601, which this writer (Maffei) reduces to prose, says of

that period: "Everywhere in Mantua are seen feasts, jousts, masks, banquets, plays, music, balls, delights, dancing. To these, the young girls," an enormity in Italy, "as well as the matrons, go in magnificent dresses; and even the churches are scenes of love-making. Good mothers, instead of teaching their daughters the use of the needle, teach them the arts of rouging, dressing, singing, and dancing. Naples and Milan scarcely produce silk enough, or India and Peru gold and gems enough, to deck out female impudence and pride. Courtiers and warriors perfume themselves as delicately as ladies; and even the food is scented, that the mouth may exhale fragrance. . . . . No longer in Lydia nor in Cyprus, but in Mantua, is fixed the realm of pleasure." The Mantuans were a different people in the old republican times, when a fine was imposed for blasphemy, and the blasphemer put into a basket and drowned in the lake, if he did not pay within fifteen days; which must have made profanity a luxury even to the rich. But in that day a man had to pay twenty soldi (seventy-five cents) if he spoke to a woman in church; and women were not allowed even the moderate diversion of going to funerals, and could not wear

silk lace about the neck, nor have dresses that dragged more than a yard, nor crowns of pearls or gems, nor belts worth more than ten livres (twenty-five dollars), nor purses worth more than fifteen soldi (fifty cents).

Possibly as an antidote for the corruption brought into the world with Vincenzo, there was another Gonzaga born about the same period, who became in due time Saint Louis Gonzaga, and remains to this day one of the most powerful friends of virtue to whom a good Catholic can pray. He is particularly recommended by his biographer, the Jesuit Father Cesari, in cases of temptation, and improving stories are told Italian youth of the miracles he works under such circumstances. He vowed chastity for his own part at an age when most children do not know good from evil, and he carried the fulfilment of this vow to such extreme, that, being one day at play of forfeits with other boys and girls, and being required to kiss —not one of the little maidens—but her *shadow* on the wall, he would not, preferring to lose his pawn.

San Luigi Gonzaga descended from that Ridolfo who put his wife to death, and his father was Marquis of Castiglione delle Stivere. He was born in 1568, and, being

the first son, was heir to the marquisate; but from his earliest years he had a call to the Church. His family did everything possible to dissuade him—his father with harshness, and his uncle, Duke William of Mantua, with tenderness—from his vocation. The latter even sent a "bishop of rare eloquence" to labour with the boy at Castiglione; but everything was done in vain. In due time Luigi joined the Company of Jesus, renounced this world, and died at Rome in the odour of sanctity, after doing such good works as surprised every one. His brother Ridolfo succeeded to the marquisate, and fell into a quarrel with Duke William about lands, which dispute Luigi composed before his death. About all which the Reverend Jesuit Father Tolomei has shown how far heaviness can go in the dramatic form, and has written a pitiless play, wherein everybody goes into a convent with the fall of the curtain. Till the reader has read this play, he has never (properly speaking) been bored. For the happiness of mankind, it has not been translated out of the original Italian.

From the time of the first Vincenzo's death, there are only two tragic events which lift the character of Mantuan history

above the quality of *chronique scandaleuse*, namely, the Duke Ferdinand's repudiation of Camilla Faa di Casale, and the sack of Mantua in 1630. The first of these events followed close upon the demise of the splendid Vincenzo; for his son Francesco reigned but a short time, and died, leaving a little daughter of three years to the guardianship of her uncle, the Cardinal Ferdinand. The law of the Mantuan succession excluded females; and Ferdinand, dispensed from his ecclesiastical functions by the Pope, ascended the ducal throne. In 1615, not long after his accession, as the chronicles relate, in passing through a chamber of the palace he saw a young girl playing upon a cithern, and, being himself young, and of the ardent temper of the Gonzagas, he fell in love with the fair minstrel. She was the daughter of a noble servant of the Duke, who had once been his ambassador to the court of the Duke of Savoy, and was called Count Ardizzo Faa Monferrino di Casale; the poor girl loved her ducal wooer; and besides, the crown was a glittering temptation, and she consented to a marriage which, for state and family reasons, was kept secret. When the fact was bruited, it raised the wrath and ridicule

of Ferdinand's family, and the Duke's sister Margaret, Duchess of Ferrara, had so lofty a disdain of his *mésalliance* with an inferior, that she drove him to desperation with her sarcasms. About this time Camilla's father died, with strong evidences of poisoning; and the wife being left helpless and friendless, her noble husband resorted to the artifice of feigning that there had never been any marriage, and thus sought to appease his family. Unhappily, however, he had given her a certificate of matrimony, which she refused to surrender when he put her away, so that the Duke, desiring afterwards to espouse the daughter of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, was obliged to present a counterfeit certificate to his bride, who believed it the real marriage contract, and destroyed it. When the Duchess discovered the imposition, she would not rest till she had wrung the real document from Camilla, under the threat of putting her son to death. The miserable mother then retired to a convent, and died of a broken heart, while Ferdinand disclaimed his only legitimate son. After this, a kind of retribution, amid all his political successes, seems to have pursued the guilty Duke. His second wife never ceased to distrust and reproach him:

she could not believe him in anything since the affair of the counterfeit marriage contract. She was very religious, and embittered Ferdinand's days with continued sermons and reproofs, and made him order, in the merry Mantuan court, all the devotions commanded by her confessor.

So Ferdinand died childless, and, it is said, in sore remorse, and was succeeded in 1626 by his brother Vincenzo, another hope of the faith and light of the Church. His brief reign lasted but one year, and was ignoble as it was brief, and fitly ended the direct line of the Gonzagas. Vincenzo, though an ecclesiastic, never studied anything, and was disgracefully ignorant. Lacking the hereditary love of letters, he had not the warlike boldness of his race; and resembled his ancestors only in the love he bore to horses, hunting, and women. He was enamoured of the widow of one of his kinsmen, a woman no longer young, but of still agreeable person, strong will, and quick wit, and of a fascinating presence, which Vincenzo could not resist. The excellent prince was wooing her, when he received the nomination of cardinal from Pope Paul v., and Vincenzo bundled up the cardinal's purple and sent it back, with a very careless

and ill-mannered letter to the ireful Pope, who swore never to make another Gonzaga cardinal He then married the widow, but soon wearied of her, and spent the rest of his days in vain attempts to secure a divorce, in order to be restored to his ecclesiastical benefices. And one Christmas morning *he* died childless; and three years later the famous sack of Mantua took place. The events leading to this crime are part of one of the most complicated episodes of Italian history.

Ferdinand, as guardian of his brother's daughter Maria, claimed the Duchy of Monferrato as part of his dominion; but his claim was disputed by Maria's grandfather, the Duke of Savoy, who contended that it reverted to him, on the death of his daughter, as a fief which had been added to Mantua merely by the intermarriage of the Gonzagas with his family. He was supported in this claim by the Spaniards, then at Milan. The Venetians and the German Emperor supported Ferdinand, and the French advanced the claim of a third, a descendant of Lodovico Gonzaga, who had left Mantua a century before, and entered upon the inheritance of the Duchy of Nevers-Rethel. The Duke of Savoy was

one of the boldest of his warlike race; and the Italians had great hopes of him as one great enough to drive the barbarians out of Italy. But nearly three centuries more were wanted to raise his family to the magnitude of a national purpose; and Carlo Emanuel spent his greatness in disputes with the petty princes about him. In this dispute for Monferrato he was worsted; for at the treaty of Pavia, Monferrato was assured to Duke Ferdinand of Mantua.

Ferdinand afterwards died without issue, and Vicenzo likewise died childless; and Charles Gonzaga of Nevers-Rethel, who had married Maria, Ferdinand's ward, became heir to the Duchy of Mantua, but his right was disputed by Ferrante Gonzaga of Guastalla. Charles hurriedly and half secretly introduced himself into Mantua without consultation with Venetian, Spaniard, or German. While Duke Olivares of Spain was meditating his recognition, his officer at Milan tried to seize Mantua and failed; but the German Emperor had been even more deeply offended, and claimed the remission of Charles's rights as a feudatory of the Roman Empire, until he should have regularly invested him. Charles prepared for defence. Meanwhile Spain and Savoy

seized Monferrato, but they were afterwards defeated by the French, and the Spanish Milanese was overrun by the Venetians and Mantuans. The German Emperor then sent down his Landsknechts, and in 1630 besieged Mantua, while the French promised help and gave none, and the Pope exhorted Charles to submit. The Venetians, occupied with the Uskok pirates, could do little in his defence. To the horrors of this unequal and desperate war were added those of famine; and the Jews, passing between the camp and the city, brought a pest from the army into Mantua, which raged with extraordinary violence among the hungry and miserable people. In vain they formed processions, and carried the Blood of Christ about the city. So many died that there were not boats enough to bear them away to their sepulture in the lakes, and the bodies rotted in the streets. There was not wanting at this time the presence of a traitor in the devoted city; and that this wretch was a Swiss will be a matter of no surprise. The despicable valour of these republicans has everywhere formed the best defence of tyrants, and their fidelity has always been at the service of the highest bidder. The recreant was a

lieutenant in the Swiss Guard of the Duke; and when he had led the Germans into Mantua, and received the reward of his infamy, two German soldiers, placed over him for his protection, killed him and plundered him of his spoil.

The sack now began, and lasted three days, with unspeakable horrors. The Germans (then the most slavish and merciless of soldiers) violated Mantuan women, and buried their victims alive. The harlots of their camp cast off their rags, and, robing themselves in the richest spoils they could find, rioted with brutal insult through the streets, and added the shame of drunken orgies to the dreadful scene of blood and tears. The Jews were driven forth almost naked from the Ghetto. The precious monuments of ages were destroyed; or such as the fury of the soldiers spared the avarice of their generals consumed; and pictures, statues, and other works of art were stolen and carried away. The churches were plundered, the sacred houses of religion were sacked, and the nuns who did not meet a worse fate went begging through the streets.

The imperial general, Aldringher, had, immediately upon entering the city, ap-

propriated the Ducal Palace to himself as his share of the booty. He placed a strong guard around it, and spoiled it at leisure and systematically, and gained fabulous sums from the robbery. After the sack was ended, he levied upon the population (from whom his soldiers had forced everything that terror and torture could wring from them) four contributions, amounting to a hundred thousand doubloons. This population had, during the siege and sack, been reduced from thirty to twelve thousand; and Aldringher had so thoroughly accomplished his part of the spoliation, that the Duke Charles, returning after the withdrawal of the Germans, could not find in the Ducal Palace so much as a bench to sit upon. He and his family had fled half naked from their beds on the entry of the Germans, and, after a pause in the citadel, had withdrawn to Ariano, whence the Duke sent ambassadors to Vienna to expose his miserable fate to the Emperor. The conduct of Aldringher was severely rebuked at the capital; and the Empress sent Carlo's wife ten thousand zecchini, with which they returned at length to Mantua. It is melancholy to read how his neighbours had to compassionate his destitution; how the

Grand Duke of Tuscany sent him upholstery for two state chambers; how the Duke of Parma supplied his table-service; how Alfonso of Modena gave him a hundred pairs of oxen, and as many peasants to till his desolated lands. His people always looked upon him with evil eyes, as the cause of their woes; and after a reign of ten years he died of a broken heart, or, as some thought, of poison.

Carlo had appointed as his successor his nephew and namesake, who succeeded to the throne ten years after his uncle's death, the Princess Maria Gonzaga being regent during his minority. Carlo II. early manifested the amorous disposition of his blood, but his reign was not distinguished by remarkable events. He was of imperial politics during those interminable French-Austrian wars, and the French desolated his dominions more or less. In the time of this Carlo II., we read of the Jews being condemned to pay the wages of the Duke's archers for the extremely improbable crime of killing some Hebrews who had been converted; and there is an account of the Duchess going on foot to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Grace, to render thanks for her son's recovery from a fever, and her daugh-

ter's recovery from the bite of a monkey. Mantua must also have regained something of its former gaiety; for in 1652 the Austrian Archdukes and the Medici spent Carnival there. Carlo II. died, like his father, with suspicions of poisoning and undoubted evidences of debauchery. He was a generous and amiable prince; and, though a shameless profligate, was beloved by his subjects, with whom, no doubt, his profligacy was not a reproach.

Ferdinand Carlo, whose ignoble reign lasted from 1665 to 1708, was the last and basest of his race. The histories of his country do not attribute a single virtue to this unhappy prince, who seems to have united in himself all the vices of all the Gonzagas. He was licentious and depraved as the first Vincenzo, and he had not Vincenzo's courage; he was luxurious as the second Francesco, but had none of his generosity; he taxed his people heavily that he might meanly enjoy their substance without making them even the poor return of national glory; he was grasping as Guglielmo, but saved nothing to the state; he was as timid as the second Vincenzo, and yet made a feint of making war, and went to Hungary at one time to fight against the Turk. But

he loved far better to go to Venice in his gilded barge, and to spend his Carnivals amid the infinite variety of that city's dissoluteness. He was so ignorant as scarcely to be able to write his name; but he knew all vicious things from his cradle, as if, indeed, he had been gifted to know them by instinct through the profligacy of his parents. It is said that even the degraded Mantuans blushed to be ruled by so dull and ignorant a wretch: but in his time, nevertheless, Mantua was all rejoicings, promenades, pleasure voyages, and merry-makings. "The Duke recruited women from every country to stock his palace," says an Italian author, "where they played, sang, and made merry at his will and theirs." "In Venice," says Volta, "he surrendered himself to such diversions without shame, or stint of expense. He not only took part in all public entertainments and pleasures of that capital, but he held a most luxurious and gallant court of his own; and all night long his palace was the scene of theatrical representations by dissolute women, with music and banqueting, so that he had a worse name than Sardanapalus of old." He sneaked away to these gross delights in 1700, while the Emperor was at war with the Spaniards, and

left his Duchess (a brave and noble woman, the daughter of Ferrante Gonzaga, Duke of Guastalla) to take care of the duchy, then in great part occupied by Spanish and French forces. This was the war of the Spanish Succession; and it used up poor Ferdinand, who had not a shadow of interest in it. He had sold the fortress of Casale to the French in 1681, feigning that they had taken it from him by fraud; and now he declared that he was forced to admit eight thousand French and Spanish troops into Mantua. Perhaps indeed he was, but the Emperor never would believe it; and he pronounced Ferdinand guilty of felony against the Empire, and deposed him from his duchy. The Duke appealed against this sentence to the Diet of Ratisbon, and, pending the Diet's decision, made a journey of pleasure to France, where the Grand Monarch named him generalissimo of the French forces in Italy, though he never commanded them. He came back to Mantua after a little, and built himself a splendid theatre —the cheerful Duke.

But his end was near. The French and Austrians made peace in 1707; and next year, Monferrato having fallen to Savoy, the Austrians entered Mantua, whence the

Duke promptly fled. The Austrians marched into Mantua on the 29th of February, that being leap year, and Ferdinand came back no more. Indeed, trusting in false hopes of restoration held out to him by Venice and France, he died on the 5th of the July following, at Padua,—it was said by poison, but more probably of sin and sorrow. So ended Ducal Mantua.

The Austrians held the city till 1797. The French Revolution took it and kept it till 1799, and then left it to the Austrians for two years. Then the Cisalpine Republic possessed it till 1802; and then it was made part of the Kingdom of Italy, and so continued twelve years; after which it fell again to Austria. In 1848 there was a revolution, and the Austrian soldiers stole the precious silver case that held the phial of the true Blood. Now at last Mantua belongs to the Kingdom of Italy, with the other forts of the Quadrilateral.

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Captain Jenness, of the sailing ship Aroostook, bound from Boston straight to Trieste, the old man asks the good-natured captain to take charge of his "little girl." The captain thinks the child may be "a bother on the voyage;" but, reflecting that he is used to children, consents, and the grandfather goes back to fetch Lydia. The captain's dismay when "the little girl" turns out to be a slim, beautiful, and well-dressed damsel, whom her confiding grandfather leaves solely in his charge on the day of sailing, is considerable, especially as he has already promised berths to three young men, two of them of excellent character and antecedents, the third a youth of dissipated habits, whom out of compassion he had consented to take to Europe, in order to try the reforming effects upon him of a sea-voyage. Lydia has a few pangs of lonely disappointment when she finds out that there is neither stewardess nor woman of any kind on board, and the sight of the young men is an uncomfortable surprise; but on the whole she is too ignorant and too guileless to feel the awkwardness of the situation as she should. And out of pure good feeling the young men, after the first shock, determined that, as far as in them lies, she shall never feel it.

The two friends Staniford and Dunham discuss the situation after the first common meal of the oddly assorted little company:—

"As Dunham lit his cigar at Staniford's on deck, the former said significantly, 'What a very American thing!' 'What a bore,' answered the other. Dunham had never been abroad, as one might imagine from his calling Lydia's presence a very American thing; but he had always consorted with people who had lived in Europe, he read the *Revue des Deux Mondes* habitually, and the London weekly newspapers, and this gave him the foreign standpoint from which he was fond of viewing his native world. 'It's incredible,' he added. 'Who in the world can she

be?' 'Oh, I don't know,' returned Staniford, with a cold disgust; 'I should object to the society of such a young person for a month or six weeks, under the most favourable circumstances and with frequent respites; but to be imprisoned on the same ship with her, and to have her on one's mind and in one's way the whole time, is more than I bargained for. Captain Jenness should have told us; though, I suppose, he thought that if she could stand it we might. There's that point of view. But it takes all ease and comfort out of the prospect.'"

At this point, however, the questionable youth, Mr. Hicks, comes up to report all the gossip about Lydia that he can glean from the cabin-boy, and immediately the sympathies of the two friends set strongly in her favour. Hicks finds himself severely snubbed, and Staniford concludes that Lydia's unprotected presence among them is "plainly due to a supernatural innocence on the part of herself and her friends, which wouldn't occur among any other people in the world but ours." They agree, so far as they are able, to "make her feel that there is nothing irregular or uncommon in her being here as she is." At the same time Staniford, the elder and cleverer of the two friends, does not allow his gentlemanly instincts to blind him to the comedy of Lydia's Yankeeisms and curious bringing up. He philosophically declares her beauty is only "part of the general tiresomeness of the situation," and finds perpetual entertainment in speculating with Dunham as to the countrified views and feelings hidden under the girl's quiet manner. Meanwhile the whole ship devotes itself to taking care of Lydia. Dunham, who is High Church, and engaged, befriends her from a purely disinterested standpoint, the captain watches over her as he would over one of his own girls, the sailors show her little attentions, the cabin-boy fetches and carries for her, and even Hicks, now compulsorily sober and well-behaved, shows

himself pleasant and respectful. Only Staniford holds aloof. He has a turn for character-reading, and for a time prefers dissecting Lydia at a distance to making friends with her. Of course the aim of the story is to show how Staniford's indifference gives way first of all to the natural interest of a young man in a young girl; then to jealousy, and, lastly, to the mingled power of the young girl's beauty, helplessness, and genuine refinement of nature.

The only incident, properly so called, in the voyage is afforded by Hicks's outbreak of drunkenness at Gibraltar, and by Staniford's meeting with some fashionable friends of his at Messina. But every page is interesting, and Lydia's *tête-à-têtes*, now with Dunham, now with Staniford, her musical relations with Hicks, and the jealousy they arouse in Staniford, and through it all her innocence, her *naïveté*, her unconsciousness in the midst of a situation which would have proved intolerably embarrassing to any one less ignorant and unworldly, make up a charming picture. The plot begins to thicken towards the climax with the appearance of the Messina friends. Their astonishment recalls Staniford to the oddity of Lydia's position, and at the same time makes him feel by contrast the peculiar rarity and simplicity of her character. His love takes rapid and fiery shape, and only his chivalrous scruples prevent his proposing to her before they part at Trieste. He resolves, however, to take no advantage of her loneliness, and to wait till she is under her aunt's roof at Venice. The complications to which this leads, and the cruel way in which Lydia's eyes are opened at Venice to the social solecism she has committed in crossing the Atlantic without a chaperone, bring a vein of pathos into the story, and supply the necessary relief to the pretty little Utopia on board the Aroostook.—*The Times*

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